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Islam in Iran

A Research Paper

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Islam in Iran (U)

A Research Paper

*Research for this report was completed
on 31 August 1979.*

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addressed to the Chief of the Division on [redacted]

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Islam in Iran**Overview**

This paper describes Shia Islam as it has developed in Iran and as it is practiced in Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's theocracy.

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The experience with a modern government based entirely on Islam is too brief to be definitive. One year out of nearly 13 centuries of Shia development is inconsequential in a nation that has maintained a sense of identity for more than two and a half milleniums. In addition, Khomeini's vision of an Islamic Republic may not outlive him. What will outlive him, however, is the role that any Iranian politician in the foreseeable future must give to Islam as a major determinant of social, economic, and political actions. This paper provides some background to understanding not only what has happened but what may happen.

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Several conclusions emerge. Islam is not and never was—except perhaps under Muhammad—the unitary entity of Islamic theory. This theory, however, remains the ideal, and most Muslims will argue, against history and evidence, that Islam remains undivided. Some even argue that divisions within Islam were both created and exacerbated by Western machinations.

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The monarchy and Islam were the predominant forces in Iran for 13 centuries. Iran was defined more by its national heritage of culture and literature glorifying the monarchy—the protector of the nation against outside enemies—than by Islam. Other nations were Muslim but only Iran had a shah. The choice in the 16th century of Shia Islam as the national religion was a conscious effort to separate Iran from the predominantly Sunni Arab world.

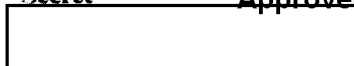
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Islam and the monarchy were always uneasy allies. Each demanded total loyalty and each was authoritarian. Through the centuries the two maintained a rough equivalence of power. Compromises were made, and confrontations were usually, but not always, avoided. The monarch was always a Muslim, or if he came in as a non-Muslim Turkish or Mongol invader, he soon embraced Islam. The society was indisputably Muslim. Although there were frequent periods of enmity between the religious and civil establishments, the monarchy was not perceived as threatening Islam, nor was Shia Islam perceived as out to abolish the monarchy. Until the 20th century the government was the protector of religion, and the clerical establishment provided the moral guidance for society and the teachers, lawyers, and bureaucrats that made the government function. This rough

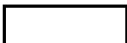
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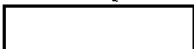
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equivalence of power between the two institutions seems now to be being destroyed by the impact of European- and American-inspired modernization. 


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The European influence became significant in Iran only in the latter part of the 19th century. Except for relatively small Christian missionary activities, the European influence was predominantly secular. The economic, military, and scientific achievement of the European states had a strong impact in Iran, as in most of the Middle East. Iranian students, diplomats, and officials returned to Iran with European concepts, philosophies, and often Europeans themselves to try to modernize the corrupt, unwieldy, and inefficient oriental bureaucracy that had developed through the centuries. 

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The clerical establishment was almost universally disapproving. What had not already been provided for by Islam could only be harmful. European influence prospered, however, and many proponents of modernization became strongly anticlerical. European influence did not so much create anticlericalism as confirm it, for Iran has always produced its share of agnostics, atheists, and religious reformers. Early in the 20th century, a brief coalition of secular reformers and religious leaders was directed against the Shah, who was perceived by both groups—for different reasons—to be detrimental to the nation. The result was the 1906 constitution, a document that until recently has had the allegiance of all, although its European-style provisions and parliamentary system were often ignored. 

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When Reza Shah assumed the throne in 1925, he pushed a secular program of modernization and industrialization. In the process he confronted the clergy—as he did most problems—head-on, stripping it of its role as teacher and judge, and bringing it under closer government scrutiny. During Reza Shah's reign there were flurries of antigovernment activity by the clergy, but he suppressed them. After Reza Shah's abdication in 1941 and the assumption of the office by Muhammad Reza, the clergy regained some of its stature. When the Shah took over full control of the government in the early 1960s and started his reform programs, he again was firm with the clergy, which had expressed opposition to such things as land reform and women's suffrage. 

After 1963 when the first serious clash occurred between supporters of the clergy and the government, there was a virtual state of war between the two. Although the government had the power, the clergy had the support of the masses. The incompatibility of modern influences and a traditional society, the growing gap between the generally well-to-do westernized elite and the bulk of the population, and an unacceptable level of corruption, enabled the

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clergy to rally a significant portion of the urban proletariat to its side. The Shah also made political blunders. He was unwilling to permit free political participation, and he believed—without being challenged by his advisers—that his programs had won the allegiance of the masses. In 1976 he thought it expedient to lessen his control somewhat, but he was unprepared for the upsurge in opposition activity. He was never able to reestablish control. The opposition took full advantage of this exploitable weakness. In addition, the illness from which he had been suffering for several years and the medication he had been taking may have prevented him from making the kind of difficult decisions that had been his hallmark for so many years.

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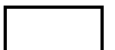
The replacement of the monarch by the theocrat has not solved Iran's problems nor is it likely to do so. Islam is conceived by its adherents as a total social, political, religious, and economic system. Whatever is good, right, and correct has or can be subsumed under Islam. All else is not only incorrect but evil. Shia Islam has also developed the theory espoused by Khomeini of the "just jurisprudent," the man who because of his greater knowledge of Islam, his piety, his ability to "enjoin that which is good and forbid that which is evil" is the only person qualified to direct the nation.

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Also included in this concept is the role of the clergy in general in directing the nation's affairs. The ones best qualified to do this are the *mujtaheds*—more lawyers than clergymen—who are experts in Islamic law. The man (women are excluded) who attains the rank of *mujtahed* has been through many decades of intensive and detailed but limited learning. His intellectual horizons are generally circumscribed by the traditional nature of his material and his sources. *Mujtaheds* have the right to make new interpretations of new situations by using traditional material. The Shia authorities argue that this keeps Islam continually relevant to the modern world. In theory it does. In practice it appears to provide only the opportunity to assert that what is new is unacceptable. *Mujtaheds* permit people to drink soft drinks because they do not contain alcohol and no prohibition of nonalcoholic drinks is found in the Koran. A *mujtahed* could not rule against the veiling of women, because this is prescribed in the Koran and no argument of equality of treatment, suitability, or change in circumstances can prevail against the Koran. It is explicitly described or defined in Islamic law—the *Shariah*—and is inviolate. If there is no specificity, then the *mujtahed* must decide what is really meant, not by personal reasoning but by reference to the whole body of the *Shariah*.

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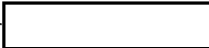
A substantial number of nonclerical but devout Muslims have joined in trying to help Khomeini build his Islamic government. Most of these are caught between two worlds. They usually have a modern education, often received abroad, but unlike the early Western- educated class, they have not rejected traditional Islam. They try to reconcile the two worlds, not always

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successfully. Mixed with all this are the half-assimilated ideas of imperialism and colonialism they have acquired from their doctrinaire Marxist associates. 

Ali Shariati, who died in 1977, was one such Western-educated writer who attempted to show how Islam, properly understood, was compatible with and could answer all the needs of the modern world. In the process he rejected almost everything that was typical of Shia Islam for three centuries. He has become the guide for many who profess to follow Khomeini, but Khomeini himself seems never to have expressed an opinion on Shariati's ideas. The two have several things in common—an insistence on political activism, the reconciliation of Shia and Sunni Islam, and the role of Islam as the dominant factor in Iranian society. Shariati is cited by some as the inspiration for the Forqan terrorist group that has been responsible for the murders of several clergymen and one general. 


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Khomeini is not unopposed by other clergymen, although at this point he is unchallenged. One school of Shia thought—Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari's for one—opposes the deep involvement of the clergy in government. Government should be left to secular authorities, although obviously the authorities should be good Muslims, follow religious principles, and be advised by clergymen. Direct involvement risks the very existence of Islam because acceptance of responsibility also implies the acceptance of blame for failure and this should be avoided. Shariatmadari as a relative moderate in church-state relations got along with the Shah's regime while Khomeini was challenging it. Both attitudes have good precedent in the history of Shia Islam. 

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Shariatmadari received government funds a few years ago—as did other clergymen. This has damaged his reputation in the past, but seems to have little effect now. There is no indication that he performed specific services for the money. His moderate attitude is his own and not bought. He may have believed that government funds were his right as one of the country's most prominent religious leaders. 

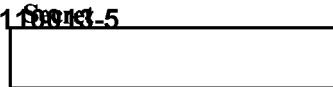
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Iran's first president, Abol Hasan Bani-Sadr, will now have an opportunity to implement his Islamic economics. The Revolutionary Council dominated by the clergy will continue to set high policy under the guidance of Ayatollah Khomeini, and a parliament sometime in the future will be faced not with legislating but with determining what regulations are necessary to implement God's laws. Iran now faces the challenge of turning a modernizing secular government into a theocratic one without losing its unique identity. 

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Islam in Iran



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Introduction

The trouble with you Americans is that you are stupid. You do not understand Shia Islam and the way we Iranian Muslims choose our leaders. . . . The books that are published in the West about Islam are mostly about Sunnis and most are blasphemous.

Ayatollah Mahmud Taleqani
January 1979

This paper attempts to understand and describe Shia Islam as it is practiced in Iran, to comment on its goals, and to suggest ways in which Iran will be affected by Shia efforts to achieve these goals. Most Western studies of Islam have dealt with the Sunnis, the predominant sect in the Muslim world; Shiism, the official religion of Iran, is generally treated tangentially if at all. Many of the more devout Muslims share Ayatollah Taleqani's opinion that most Western studies are blasphemous and that they intend to denigrate Islam in order to render it ineffective as a challenge to the West.

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The sort of questioning, searches for influences, and analysis that Western scholars indulge in are blasphemous to a devout Muslim. For him the Koran, as revealed to Muhammad by Allah, is a faithful copy of the ideal work which exists in heaven. It was revealed in Arabic and, according to the most conservative view, no translation of the Koran is possible. If it is translated, it is not the Koran, although the translation may help the non-Arab understand the true Koran. Likewise, the traditions and acts of the Prophet and the laws derived from them are hardly less authoritative. To believe otherwise is blasphemy.

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The popular uprising of 1977-78 that forced the Shah from his throne represented the temporary coalescence of two antithetical groups—the traditional clergy and the secular modernizers (as represented by most of the rejuvenated National Front). Their common bond was opposition to Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. For the religious minded he represented the destruction of

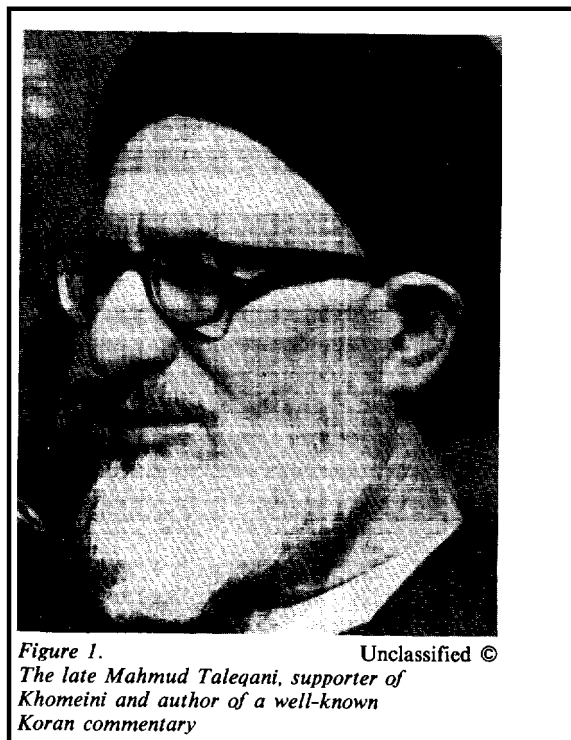


Figure 1. Unclassified ©
The late Mahmud Taleqani, supporter of Khomeini and author of a well-known Koran commentary

Islam; for the secular modernizers he represented dictatorship and the repression of a free and open political system. For the latter Islam is not a primary motivation, but Shiism is a unique symbol of Iran—one for all Iranians to rally around, even while pursuing essentially secular goals.

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The seeds of conflict were thus sown between those for whom Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, or any Khomeini-like figure, is only a symbol representing Iran and those for whom he is a tangible authority representing Islam.

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The fundamental differences between the two emerged as soon as the Shah left Iran. The conflict between the government of Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan and the *komiteh* system of Ayatollah Khomeini marked the beginning of what will be a long struggle between

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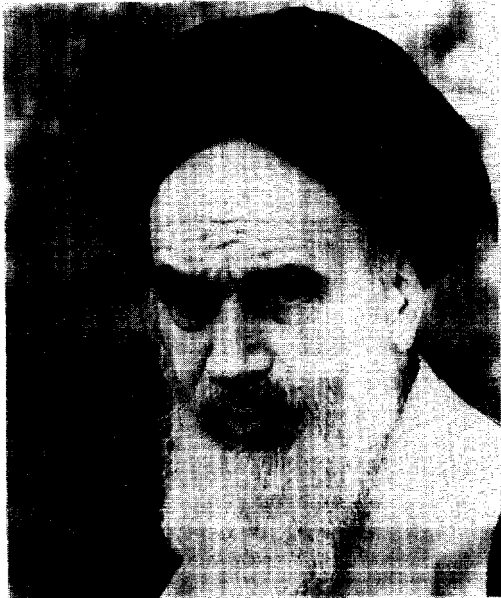


Figure 2.
Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

Unclassified ©

two opposing philosophies of government. There will be attempts to bridge the gap between the two—some have already been undertaken—and there will be periods of uneasy peace. The problem will not be solved, however, until Shia Islam makes its peace with the modern world. [redacted]

For the devout Shiite, this is a nonexistent problem; Islam as he construes it has the correct answer for any problem, in any age. It is more a matter of bringing the modern world into agreement with Islam. The Western mind—conditioned by a long history of skepticism, the rejection of absolutes, and the tolerance of a wide range of aberrant social and personal behavior—is uneasy with a religio-legal system that seems to leave little room for compromise or for due process in the Western sense. But the tenets of Islam are not the work of man but of God, and His work is not subject to question. The uncertainties, divisiveness, agnosticism, and self-indulgence of Western culture most evident to the devout Shiite contrast sharply with the stability and certainty promised by the strict application of Koranic law. [redacted]

Islam is better understood as an all-encompassing ideology than as a religion in the Western sense. There is not even a suitable word in Arabic, Persian, or other

Islamic languages for "temporal" or "secular."¹ This paper refers to Islam in the all-encompassing sense as well as the more restricted sense, for Muslims themselves do not make the distinction. Making contracts, paring nails, and prayer are all religious acts. [redacted]

Islam is the last revealed religion, completing and perfecting Judaism and Christianity. One Muslim scholar wrote that "Judaism is based on the fear of God, Christianity on the love of Him, and Islam on the knowledge of Him."² [redacted]

Islam is the last religion in the cycle of prophecy that began with Adam and proceeded through Abraham and Christ to Muhammad. [redacted]

For nearly a thousand years Islam was virtually unchallenged militarily, economically, and intellectually. The borders controlled by Islam fluctuated on the periphery, but little that Islam won in its centuries of expansion was lost. The last three centuries and especially the last century and a half brought a challenge from Europe with which traditional Islam was unable to cope economically or militarily. The detailed reasons for the European rise and Muslim decline are beyond the scope of this paper, but include the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, the rise of scientific thought, the formalism and inflexibility of Islamic thought after its great period, the lack of innovation, and political divisiveness.³ [redacted]

Whatever the reasons for the disparity that arose between Christian and Muslim civilizations, many in the Muslim world came to see their traditional culture as inadequate to deal with the world that Europe had created. The success of European arms, industry and commerce, and scientific progress were taken as self-evident proof of this. The challenge could only be met, many in the East argued, by adopting those things—material and mental—that had made Europe

¹ Seyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (New York: Praeger 1967), p. 3. (U)

² *ibid.*, p. 34. (U)

³ This is oversimplified, but see Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Ventures of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 3 volumes, for masterful but in many ways idiosyncratic treatment of these points. Other treatments are in Richard Frye (ED), *Islam and the West* (S. Gravenhage: Mouton & Co., 1957) and Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West; The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1962). (U)

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great. In doing this, Islam lost the opportunity to develop its own path to modernization. Now, the apparent decline of European (and American) power, moral collapse, and economic disarray as seen from an Islamic perspective have aroused the expectation of some in the Muslim world that Islam can once more assert itself. This expectation has not yet turned into a mass movement, and most Muslim governments are not prepared to revert to the traditional practices that the fundamentalists would like. Spokesmen for a rejuvenated Islam are becoming more vocal, but the trend appears to be more toward a renewal than to a conscious attempt to adapt Islam to a world it did not make.



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Islam in Iran

Part I: The Relations Between Islam and the Monarchy in Iran

The revolution in Iran is the most conspicuous example of an "Islamic resurgence." It is too early to know if recent developments mark a genuine long-term return to Islam or are merely a temporary setback in the general trend toward complete secularization. There seems little doubt, however, that religious considerations will play more of a role in government actions and policies in the foreseeable future than they have for the last half century.

The religion of Islam and the institution of the Persian monarchy have been the two predominant forces in Iran for 13 centuries. The former established its position around the year 641, when Arab Muslim armies defeated the last of the Sassanian shahs and Islam replaced Zoroastrianism as the dominant religion in Iran. The latter dates from the 6th century B.C. when the first of the Persian shahs appeared in history.

The two have sometimes worked closely together, but at other times—especially in the last two centuries—have been at swords' points. Until recently, neither has been able to completely suppress the other. The importance of both institutions was recognized by the 1906 Constitution, which attempted with indifferent success to spell out roles not only for the monarchy and religion but also for a new institution—a parliamentary government independent of both. The subordination of the government to the monarchy for most of the last 73 years indicates how shallow the roots of parliamentary government have been. The idea of parliamentary government continues to be strong, however, among important segments of the educated population. But the idea continues to draw its inspiration from Western models and is essentially secular. The religious institution can be no more comfortable with an independent parliamentary government than it has been with the monarchy.

Today's opportunistic alliance between the secular nationalists and the clergy parallels the alliance of 1906. Both then and today the coalition was directed

against the monarchy rather than for any commonly shared set of beliefs.⁴ The antagonism between Islam and the monarchy arises as much from their similarities as their differences. Shia Islam demands total allegiance as does the monarchy and both are autocratic. Religious leaders have differed over the proper relation between church and state. In its most extreme form, Shiism challenges any form of secular government and insists that the clergy is the only legitimate arbiter of politics and society as well as religion. This is the dominant school of thought today.

Monarchy and Islam over the centuries have maintained an equilibrium and together have formed the base on which Iran has rested. Each in its own way was an expression of Iranian identity which served even in times of great turmoil and disruption as joint symbols of Iran—as something unique that distinguished Iran from its neighbors as well as its conquerors. Most of Iran's conquerors acquired legitimacy by becoming both Muslim and monarchs in the Iranian tradition.

The rough equivalence of the power position of the two institutions may now be disappearing, although it may be years before this becomes clear. If this is the case, Iran's future—perhaps its very existence as a unitary state—will be questioned. This traditional relationship is upset by the influence of modernization, that aggregation of technologies, organizations, modes of thought—including ideologies—and education that originated in Europe and the United States and that has challenged traditional ways worldwide.

Modernization in the early part of this century was the goal of many intellectuals who used it as a weapon against the reactionary Qajar monarchy. The Pahlavi

⁴ A discussion of the chances for a parliamentary government to emerge as a powerful, independent institution drawing its inspiration from Iranian experience and history is beyond the scope of this paper. Tentatively, I would suggest this will not happen within the next generation, although there may be short periods when parliamentary government predominates by default. (U)

Dynasty embraced modernization as its major goal but failed to permit the sort of political participation that would have provided a broad popular base for its programs. This political failure threw into opposition many intellectuals whose essential goals were the same as the Pahlavis, but who could not accept the monarch as the leader of this endeavor. But the secular-minded modernizers are as uneasy with clerical domination as with that of the Shah. []

The anticlericalism of an influential group of young writers and poets popular among the middle classes in the first decades of the 20th century provided support for Reza Shah's secularizing reforms in the 1920s and 1930s.⁶ Reza's Minister of Court Teymurtash talking to the American Minister expressed his opposition to Christian missions in Iran and commented that Iran was trying to get rid of religion in its own schools:

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He asked how we would like it if they bundled up a crowd of moth-eaten mullas and sent them to America to open schools? ⁷ []

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The Anticlerical Impulse in Iran

Some modernizers have almost uncritically accepted Westernization; some have been strong critics of the West. In both cases anticlericalism has often been present. Many intellectuals of the past have considered Islam to be a barrier to the sort of changes that Iran needed to make if it intended to become a modern state. Others have considered the clerical establishment itself to be the major culprit in keeping Iran backward. []

This anticlericalism remained a constant theme through the years. In 1922 the newspaper *Rastakhiz* warned that:

The corruption existing in Iran is entirely the fault of the clergy. In dealing with them absolute and final steps must be taken.

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A few years later, on the eve of Reza Shah's assuming the throne, *Rastakhiz* addressed an editorial to him:

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The root of our evil is not insecurity, it is the class of the clergy. If this root is not attacked soon, all the gains of the army and the army itself will vanish. The best method of eradicating the clergy is to take away their means of livelihood. The *waqf* lands should be taken away and sold to poor peasants. []

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The influence of anticlericalism should not be underestimated. Most members of the intelligentsia in the past have shared it. A century ago, well before the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, Iran's first privately owned newspaper wrote in its first and last issue:⁵

Some so-called progressive mullas want a constitutional regime that is in accordance with the *shari'ah*. . . . They must realize that there is much of great importance in today's society that is unmentioned in the Koran. . . . What solutions do the mullas have for these problems? Do they wish to proceed according to *fiqh*? or do they propose to consult some *mujtahed* in Najaf? . . . If all the *mujtaheds* were to put their heads together, their combined intelligence would be inadequate to cope with these matters. Therefore we must respectfully approach the house of the 'unclean and heathen' *farangi* and implore them to save us from our ignorance and misery. . . . Mullahs and zealots will persecute us and call us irreligious, but the truth is that true Islam is not opposed to civilization. []

Two decades later Ahmad Kasravi became something of a cult figure with the publication of his book *The Creed*. In it he criticized Reza Shah's reforms as being an indiscriminate adoption of Western materialism, but he was also critical of traditional Islam and particularly the Shia clergy. Kasravi was assassinated in 1945 by a member of the Fedayan-e-Islam (the

⁶ Some of these opposed Reza Shah. His decision to accept the throne (after the clergy came out in opposition to a republic) and his increasing authoritarianism lost him the support of some intellectuals. (U)

⁷ Letter, Herrick B. Young to A. C. Boyce, 19 August 1932, from Presbyterian Mission files, quoted in W. Copeland, "American Influence on the Development of Higher Education in Iran," Ph.D. dissertation, U. of Pennsylvania, 1973, p. 61. (U)

⁵ Government and religious pressure forced it to close. The episode is described in Amin Banani, *The Modernization of Iran* (Stanford, 1961), p. 22f. (U)

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Devotees of Islam), an event that was greeted with joy in clerical circles in Qom.⁸ []

More recently Jalal Al-i-Ahmad, whose 1962 pamphlet *Gharbzadegi* (Western Mania) is a strong attack on the evils of Westernization, is also contemptuous of the clergy.⁹ Even Ali Shariati, whose writings have become the bible for many of the religiously inclined intelligentsia, is strongly anticlerical, blaming the priests for corrupting the true faith. []

The anticlericalism of the Pahlavis thus was not peculiar to them as individuals, but represented a well-established attitude that was shared by a significant number of the educated over the last 100 years. []

For the clergy, anticlericalism is irreligion, and while clerical wrath has been directed at the Pahlavis specifically, it has also attacked a school of thought that has been influential in the past and is likely to be so again. Fundamentalist Shiite insistence that nothing be published contrary to Islam suggests that some of the best known of Iran's modern writers will be banned, a censorship that may be more extensive than that under the Shah.¹⁰ []

⁸ "On the day that the news of the death of Ahmad Kasravi at the hands of . . . the Fedayan of Islam reached Qom, I went to the home of Ayatollah Khonsari, who was slightly ill . . . to give him the good news. . . . I said Kasravi had received his just punishment for his lying pretensions and his presumption with regard to the holy tenets of religion and the customs of Islam. . . . Khonsari said 'Thank God, the color lit up his face, and he continued to say that this was very good news, that his health had been restored, and that he was no longer sick. . . .' (Ayatollah Mohammad Razi, *Asar al'Hujjah ya Tarkih va Daireh al-Ma'arif-e Howzeh-ye-Elmiyyah-ye Qom* (The Signs of the Twelfth Imam, or the History and Encyclopedia of the Qom Circle of Learning) (Qom, 1953-54). (U)

⁹ "Gharbzadegi" is difficult to translate. It has been rendered as "Weststruckness," which is close to its literal meaning, as well as "Westernization," which is, however, too neutral to convey Al-i-Ahmad's meaning. Al-i-Ahmad, whose father was a mullah and a Sufi guide, was a schoolteacher before turning to full-time writing. He was a member of the Tudeh Party for several years. (U)

¹⁰ A ban on anti-Islamic publications was written into the 1906 constitution, but like other articles that gave a special role to Islam, this one was also ignored. (U)

The Shiite Establishment Versus the State

Brief History

Space does not allow a full examination of how the clergy has developed its role in the last two centuries.¹¹ Much of the substance of today's controversies has been fought out before and may be fought out again in the future. The contest between the Shah and Khomeini was only the apex of a conflict that has waxed and waned for 200 years. []

The clergy began to assume its present status when Twelver Shiism became the state religion in the early 16th century.¹² A basic tenet was carried over from an earlier period, however, that any temporal government is illegitimate until the last imam¹³ returns to rule the world. This concept was blurred by the claim of the shahs of the time—the Safavids—to be descendants of the imams. By the same reasoning the *ulema* (the clergy collectively) lacked temporal authority, but during this period something like an official clergy developed and attained a de facto authority. The clergy provided a point of reference and leadership for the Shia community, a link between the community and the imams. The fall of the Safavids and the rise of the Qajar dynasty in the 18th century was the occasion for a break between church and state.¹⁴ The Qajars claimed much the same royal power as the Safavids but without the semilegitimacy provided by the claim to be descended from the imams. At the same time, Shia legal theory had developed the concept of a distinct role for the clergy in directing and even ruling the community. There was, thus, a fundamental conflict. The clergy, as representative of the imams could not recognize a temporal authority that claimed a superior position on earth. The monarch, for his part,

¹¹ This has been examined in detail by Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969). This book is required reading for anyone who wants to understand the roots of Khomeini's movement. (U)

¹² The Shias believe that the successors to Muhammad follow the line of his son-in-law, Ali. There were 12 of these, hence the name "Twelver," in Arabic *Ithna Ashari*. (U)

¹³ See p. 22 ff. (U)

¹⁴ Seven Qajar Shahs ruled Iran between 1779 and 1924 when Reza Shah Pahlavi took over. The Qajars were an important Turkish tribe that had played a role in Iranian history for many centuries. (U)

could not accept the position required of any believer that he follow the decisions and rulings of a *mujtahed*, for this would have made the monarchy and the government simply an executive arm of the clergy. The idea of dominance by the clergy is still held by the Khomeini school of thought. []

In practice, the Qajars acted like all Persian monarchs, tyrannically, tempered only by personal characteristics or good advisers. The clergy as a whole refused association with the state, although there were exceptions. Cooperation meant forfeiture of allegiance to the faith and loss of following among the population. If the clergy regarded government officials with abhorrence, the sentiment was often reciprocated, for many among the educated—and therefore probably connected with the government—looked with disdain on the clergy as being obscurantist and retrogressive. []

The clergy and the masses were thrown into close association through their faith and their mutual distrust of government. Although it possessed little direct power, the clergy became the natural leader of the masses and came to be regarded as their protector against government tyranny. []

The Constitutional Revolution in the early 20th century is a key episode in recent Iranian history exemplifying many problems and trends that have persisted. At that time two separate and competing movements temporarily came together. On the one hand were secular modernizers determined to bring about reform through introduction of modern European concepts and institutions, on the other hand were the clergy, whose position has already been noted. They had in common only opposition to the Shah and a determination to reduce his power. []

The clergy had effectively demonstrated its influence a few years earlier by a successful campaign against a tobacco concession granted by the Shah to a British company.¹⁵ The clergy's campaign against the concession included familiar elements—xenophobia directed against British agents of the tobacco company, and the usual antiregime sentiment enhanced by charges of

¹⁵ This was in 1891. The concession gave the British company all rights for the sale and distribution of tobacco in Iran, a monopoly of exports from Iran, and control of production within the country. (U)

selling Iran to the foreigners. This was described succinctly by one scholar:

The appearance of a large number of non-Muslims working for the tobacco corporation was one of the most important reasons for the agitation—their dominating presence was resented especially by the *ulema*. To entrust the economic affairs of the nation to foreigners endangered the existence of Iran as it was understood by the *ulema*: a national-religious community under their guidance.¹⁶

The description of clerical sentiment could have applied as well to 1978 as to 1891. []

The battle against the concession peaked with the issuance of a *fatwa*, a legal ruling, by Ayatollah Shirazi, the paramount leader of the Shia who lived in Samarra in Turkish Iraq. The *fatwa* declared that the use of tobacco in any form was *haram* (forbidden) and tantamount to war against the Hidden Imam. Tobacco was immediately abandoned throughout the country, even in the Royal Court. Shortly afterward the Shah canceled the concession. He also thought it appropriate to thank the *ulema* for “strengthening the foundations of the state.”¹⁷ The Russian Czar wrote to Shirazi offering him assistance in favorably influencing the internal affairs of Iran. The Shah's chief minister, who had a vested interest in the tobacco market, switched his association from the British to the Russians and allied himself with a portion of the clergy. []

The very success of the campaign, however, had a divisive effect on the clergy. The political influence demonstrated by the clergy seduced some of them from the pursuit of God to the pursuit of power. Some took advantage of their new influence to improve their lot by associating with the government, receiving in return honors and wealth. []

Events in subsequent years have had a familiar ring. In Tabriz schools, hotels, and wineshops—all identified with foreign influence—were destroyed by rioting religious students. Elsewhere clergy-led demonstrations, mostly directed against Russian loans, were frequent. Attacks against the Bahais, especially in

¹⁶ Algar, *op. cit.*, p. 208. (U)

¹⁷ quoted in Algar, *op. cit.*, p. 218. (U)

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Esfahan, turned into a massacre, and charges of Bahaism were a useful weapon against one's enemies. The government constantly retaliated. Clerical agitators were beaten, exiled, and sometimes shot. In Tehran troops arresting an antigovernment preacher were attacked by students of religion. The students were fired on, and another clergyman who protested the action was shot dead by the commander of the troops. In protest a thousand of the Tehran *ulema* left Tehran for Qom. A prominent *mujtahed* in a sermon compared the tyranny of the Qajars to that of the Omayyads, who had been responsible for the martyrdom of the Imam Hosein. Sixty years later Ayatollah Khomeini used the same analogy in a sermon against Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. It was as effective in 1963 as it had been earlier. []

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The secular-religious coalition that cooperated against the Qajars was by no means monolithic. There were factions among both groups and compromisers who attempted to bridge the gap between the two. The demands for an *adalatkhane*, a house of justice, and later a *majlis*, or assembly, were voiced by both groups, who saw such institutions as providing a rein on the Shah's absolutism. The agitation for a constitution emphasized the confusion in the minds of those who were demanding it. The secularists thought of the constitution in European terms; the clergy thought of it as a mechanism to establish the *Shariah* (religious law). Several clergymen showed much ingenuity in demonstrating the compatibility of the two concepts.¹⁸

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The constitution as it finally emerged was an attempt to satisfy both the secularists and the clerics. The clerics lost. Several articles in the 1906 constitution gave the clergy a special role that, if followed, would have given the religious community a significant role in government affairs. One well-known article provided for a panel of eminent *mujtaheds* to judge the acceptability of any new legislation. Most of these constitutional provisions were ignored, and secularization became institutionalized. A large number of clergymen served in the *majlis* over the years, but they appear to have functioned as politicians more than as religious leaders. []

¹⁸ Abdul-Hadi Hairi, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), has a full account of the complexities surrounding this problem. (u)

The constitution curbed the powers of the Shah, but it did not eliminate the monarchy nor did it establish good government. Subsequently, one shah attempted a coup d'etat with Russian aid, the *majlis* was dissolved for several years, and the Bakhtiari tribe seized Tehran and achieved a political position from which some members of the tribe have profited ever since. Cabinets came and went as did prime ministers, and three Qajar Shahs of descending degrees of competence came to the throne. []

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By 1921 the political disarray in the country was so great that there was open talk of a coup. The Shah of the time, who could have served as a unifying symbol if nothing else, preferred the company of Paris showgirls to the company of Persian politicians. []

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Eighty miles west of Tehran at the garrison town of Qazvin, Reza Khan commanded the Persian cossack division. He had risen through the ranks, and when the Russian officers left after the Russian Revolution, he had moved into a key position. With the support of two other officers and a civilian editor-politician, Reza marched on Tehran and seized the government. As Minister of War, Prime Minister, and in 1925 as Shah, he consolidated his power and ruled Iran with an iron hand until he was driven into exile by the Soviet-British invasion in 1941. []

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Reza Shah and the Clergy

Reza Shah launched the first concerted, purposeful attack against the clerical establishment. The clergy and its supporters remember every detail of the story of the 50-year battle between the Pahlavi Dynasty and the clergy—every incident, every insult, and every death, real and imaginary, suffered at government hands. If the clergy succeeds in establishing its dominance for a long period of time—a development that is by no means certain—the history of the last half century will be rewritten in religious terms. The clergy will be the heroes and the major actors, and the Pahlavis and their supporters will be seen as the powerful but corrupt opposition party that ultimately failed in its attempts to suppress the people of God. []

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The clergy did not oppose Reza Khan's assumption of the throne in 1925. It had voiced strong opposition to an alternative proposal, that Reza establish a republic. Ataturk had just finished proclaiming a republic in

Turkey, and Islam had been promptly disestablished. The clerics feared that the same thing would happen in Iran, and they saw the continuation of the monarchy as a lesser evil than republicanism. They were soon disabused. In the next few years Reza Shah secured the passage of laws stripping them of authority in the law courts and in education and making some of them subject to military conscription.

A sense of the bitterness felt by the clergymen is evident in two episodes recounted in their own works. In 1927 after the military conscription act was passed, there was a clergy-led uprising in many parts of the country led by Haj Aqa Nurollah Esfahani. An Ayatollah later provides this version:

Nurollah and a large number of the contemporary *Ulema* . . . and several thousand from other classes revolted against the power of the time . . . and proclaimed that this tyrannical Shah and absolute dictator who was opposed to religion and was introducing waves of useless innovations . . . must be deposed. God have mercy on that holy man who held the future-seeing glasses to his eyes and saw that if that tyrannical Shah continued to rule, he would cherish the evildoers and the sinners; he would proclaim crimes and forbidden things, he would legalize the drinking of wines . . . , he would spread sodomy and fornication; he would make the women shameless without veils; he would destroy the mosques and places of pilgrimage; he would ridicule the *Ulema*, kill the teachers. He rained bullets on the Ostaneh Rezavi ¹⁹ and bound together several thousand Shi'ite pilgrims, and whether they were dead or not, he buried them under piles of dirt without cleaning them or wrapping them in shrouds.²⁰

The story of the second incident in 1928 is frequently cited to indicate Reza Shah's impatience with anyone who opposed him. The Queen visited Qom, where she went to a mosque unveiled, (or lightly veiled, the

stories differ). The preacher of the mosque rebuked them, whereupon Reza Shah rushed to Qom and, so the story goes, kicked the Ayatollah down the steps of his own mosque. Not surprisingly, the clergy see it quite differently. According to its version, a well-known preacher named Bafqi was delivering a sermon in a mosque:

A group of women from the royal court with bare faces and uncovered hair were watching the people from the top of the *ivan*.²¹ This appearance, since it occurred before the removal of the veil, and especially since it was in such a holy place, was extremely painful for the true believers. They began to call out and informed Bafqi. That ardent believer became very upset and sent a message asking who they were; if they were Muslims, why had they come so; and if they were not, what were they doing there. This caused these women to raise satanic cries because for a long time they had been annoyed by Bafqi's forbidding evil practices and considered him to be a bore. They had been waiting for the opportunity that this occurrence presented and slandered Bafqi and claimed that he was inciting people against the ruler.

Also, in the company of the treacherous mayor of the city, they aroused the unjust Shah to such an extent that the next day he surrounded the holy place of Qom with tanks and armed soldiers and intended to do to the holy place of these oppressed people what he had done to those of the Imam Ali Reza, but God was not willing and fended off his evil. In short, that *zindiq* ²² passed into the circumambulatory of the fairies with the footstep of boldness and the shoe of disrespect and sent an unbelieving soldier to summon Bafqi to the mosque. That unclean person (Reza Shah) entered the sacred place, and Bafqi was dragged to the mosque. Because of the hatred that he (Reza Shah) had felt for years toward him (Bafqi), he struck him with his weapon and his booted foot. Then he ordered that he

¹⁹ This is the shrine of Imam Reza at Mashhad. In July 1935 Sheikh Bahlul led a massive demonstration at the shrine to protest the introduction of Western headgear. The riot was finally put down by rifle and machinegun fire. The governor-general of the province was executed for his inability to control his province. (U)

²⁰ Mohammad Razi, *Asar al' Hujjah-ya-Tarikh va Daireh al-Ma'arif-e-Howzeh-ye-Elmiyyah-ye-Qom* (The Signs of the Twelfth Imam, or the History and Encyclopedia of the Qom Circle of Learning), p.28. (U)

²¹ The Queen, Taj al-Muluk, and two daughters. (U)

²² A side chamber or reception room with one side open to the main courtyard. In this case there was a balcony to the *ivan*. (U)

²³ One who endangers the state by attacking the Prophet. To be accused of being a *zindiq* is more serious than a charge of unbelief. It is used as a highly charged term of vituperation. (U)

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and several other people²⁴ be taken to Tehran, where he was imprisoned for six months, and then he was exiled to Abd-al-Azim in Rayy, where he was kept under constant surveillance until . . . he either died of natural causes or was poisoned.²⁵ (U)

For the rest of Reza Shah's reign the clergy was kept firmly suppressed. Occasional outbursts by individual clerics were dealt with harshly, and there was no coordinated campaign by the clergy against the Shah. The outbreak of World War II, however, gave the religious establishment new opportunities. []

Mohammad Reza and the Clergy

The Shah's Approach. Shah Mohammad Reza shared the opinion of many of Iran's educated class that the clergy was reactionary and obstructive. He held it in low esteem and did not bother to hide his opinions. The Shah claimed to regard religion highly, however, and to be religious himself. He often said that he believed he was under divine protection and referred to his narrow escape in two assassination attempts as proof. The religious establishment did not believe his claim to be a religious person. Although a man's beliefs are private and cannot be questioned, they are reflected in his actions, that is, his observance of those things prescribed by Islam. The Shah did not act like a Muslim, therefore he was not a Muslim, and his insistence to the contrary was sheer hypocrisy. "And of mankind are some who say, we believe in Allah and the Last Day, when they believe it not. They think to beguile Allah and those who believe, and they beguile none save themselves; but they perceive not. In their hearts is a disease, and Allah increaseth their disease. A painful doom is theirs because they lie."²⁶ []

When Reza Shah was deposed and Mohammad Reza took the throne, religious leaders regained some of their influence. The *chador*²⁷ reappeared, and religious figures once more assumed a political role. In the postwar period the most notorious of these political

²⁴ Three common criminals had sought sanctuary (*bast*) in the mosque, a not infrequent occurrence. Seizing these criminals was a violation of religious tradition by Reza Shah. Other places of *bast* were, in Qajar days, the Royal Stable, in the vicinity of artillery pieces, and, for a while, telegraph offices. A Qajar Shah in the late 19th century issued a royal order abolishing the practice of *bast*. It was ignored by everyone. (U)

²⁵ Razi, *Asar-al-Hujjah*, p. 35f.(U)

²⁶ Koran II, 8-10.

ayatollahs was Abol Ghasem Kashani, who returned to Iran after many years exile in Palestine. He, as well as other prominent Iranians, had been engaged in pro-German activities and had been arrested and exiled by the British. Kashani allied himself with Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq, and between 1951 and 1953 he was spokesman for a clerical bloc in parliament. He broke with Mossadeq, however, and played a role in the overthrow of the Prime Minister. He was never highly regarded by the most religious ayatollahs, and after Mossadeq was overthrown, Kashani's influence disappeared. It was also at this time that religiously oriented terrorist groups became active. The Fedayan-e-Islam (The Devotees of Islam), in its quest for a completely Islamic government, was responsible for several assassinations, including that of Mossadeq's predecessor as Prime Minister, Gen. Ali Razmara. []

The Shah contributed significantly to his own downfall both by actions he took and actions he failed to take. For nearly two decades he ruled autocratically. His reading of Iranian history and his own experiences convinced him that left to their own devices, Iranian politicians would only be inept—that they were so bound up in their own self-interest, competition, and political maneuvering that they were unable to accomplish anything. At the same time, whenever a prime minister gained significant power, his first impulse was to turn against the Shah. A persuasive case can be made for both of these propositions. []

When the Shah returned from his brief exile in the summer of 1953, he had—with some help—overcome the sharpest challenge he had yet faced, the nationalist movement led by Prime Minister Mossadeq.²⁸ []

²⁷ A one-piece, capelike garment. Pulled over the head with a corner held in the teeth, it served many women as a convenient outer garment. Custom more than religion recommended it until the last two or three years, when wearing it became a symbol of opposition to the Shah. The garb that seems to be popular now—the black headscarf, long-sleeved high-neck black dress, and black stockings—was rarely seen previously and was considered to be more Arab than Iranian. (U)

²⁸ By mid-1953 Mossadeq had lost most of his original supporters in political brawling. His tolerance of the Communists had frightened the military and the clergy, and except for continuing to lambaste the British and sometimes the Americans, he could put together no program. His manner of going, however, left a popular myth that was bigger than life. In a country where heroism and martyrdom go hand in hand, Mossadeq fitted the part well. That he was done in as much by his friends as his enemies is not part of the legend. (U)

25X1 Within a short time he had convinced himself that the demonstrations that had helped overthrow Mossadeq constituted a popular mandate for him to take a direct role in ruling. Between then and 1963 he consolidated his control over the army and brought the government and bureaucracy under his control. The elections in 1961, more badly rigged than usual, gave him the chance to dissolve parliament, which was dominated by the landlords and had consistently blocked his attempts to get a land reform bill enacted. When elections were held nearly 18 months later, it was the Shah who had the almost exclusive control over who would be elected.²⁹ []

25X1 One group that he tried frequently but unsuccessfully to bring under control was the clergy. He considered clerics as obstructionists who were only interested in regaining the prerogatives they had once enjoyed. As the Shah's programs were implemented, he apparently became convinced that he had won the allegiance of the masses at whom he had directed most of the reforms. He did not, however, try to organize them for political support. More significantly, the Shah was unable to permit any sort of free political expression. His attempts to organize political parties were self-defeating because everyone recognized them as creations of the Shah. He expected, and often mentioned, that when economic and social conditions were favorable, a freer political climate would be possible. Until then he was unwilling to take a chance with any party that could threaten him. []

25X1 His programs depended heavily on the skills of a new, educated middle class, familiar with Western technology and management. The Shah attracted a large number of these into his bureaucracy—enough to plan and begin his programs—but never enough on the lower levels to keep the programs moving. The scope of what the Shah hoped to do would have taxed a more efficient bureaucracy. With rare exceptions the bureaucracy remained a Middle Eastern morass of red tape, lethargy, inefficiency, and special interests, penetrated by traditional corruption. []

* Traditionally the Shah was only one of several power centers that controlled the elections. The Prime Minister, the military, provincial notables, including tribal chiefs, and the Minister of the Interior competed or cooperated in electing favorites to the *majlis*. (U)

Beginning in the mid 1970s the Shah seemed to think that the time had come to lessen his control a little. His method, however, was traditional. He created a single party to which everyone interested in politics would belong. The political process then would be played out within the single party, avoiding the divisiveness of competition among several parties. []

The Shah was also encouraged to try a more open approach by the advent of an administration in the United States with a strong human rights policy. The Shah always considered Democratic administrations to be unfriendly toward him and probably hoped that a more liberal stance would head off the arm twisting that he expected from Washington. []

With Iran's growing interest in its human rights image, which started around the fall of 1976, came the realization that people remained critical of the government's ability to respond to economic and social challenges. It was becoming obvious to Iran's leaders that to coordinate and continue Iran's economic growth, something more than the tacit cooperation of Iran's new middle class was required. By the spring of 1977 the Shah and the government began to look for ways to encourage the active support of the new elite. Criticism within the Resurgence Party, provincial and city councils, and the *majlis* was encouraged. The government resurrected and publicized the activities of three bodies created to examine the workings of the government—the Imperial Commission, the Imperial Inspectorate, and the Study Group for Iranian problems. []

The Imperial Commission was to focus on overseeing development, eradicating waste, and eliminating corruption. The Imperial Inspectorate was to monitor the progress of the administrative revolution and to conduct unannounced spot inspections of government ministries, and the Study Group was to debate and evaluate the government's problems and policies and to forward their reports to the Shah. By mid-1977 Imperial Commission meetings were being televised nationally and deficiencies in planning and implementation of the development programs were receiving widespread coverage. Government ministries and

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Prime Minister Amir Abas Hoveyda himself were forced to defend their policies and promise changes. In the Study Group many members expressed deep distrust and antipathy toward the government. The integrity of the government was impugned and its performance ridiculed. []

This program was initiated with the Shah's blessing, and Hoveyda in a July 1979 press conference stated what was to be the government's position. Every Iranian has the right to criticize and differ in all national affairs except on three points—the Shah, the constitution, and the "Shah-People Revolution." The government was clearly to adopt a more tolerant attitude toward expressions of divergent opinions. []

Additional government moves further encouraged opposition elements. A Military Court Reform bill, which sharply limited the venue of the military court system, and counterattacks against international charges of torture in Iran brought some life to the long-inactive nationalist opposition. This was reinforced by a growing belief that the danger of repression was less because the US human rights policy forced the government to be more restrained in police actions. []

Two letters, one addressed to the Shah, the other to the Prime Minister, circulated widely. They were signed by veteran opposition figures who believed that "the government would not dare to jail all of us in the present climate of human rights." The letters called on the Shah to give up his authoritarian role and for Hoveyda to permit free expression of opposition opinions. In religious circles, there was also stirring; *chadors* began to appear on the campuses as symbols of opposition and opposition to women's rights legislation became more pronounced. []

In the year that followed, opposition elements grew more vociferous. The more the government and the Shah tried to appease them by concessions, the harder the opposition—especially the religious—pushed. Concessions were seen as a sign of weakness, not of good will. []

The Clergy's Interests. In the 1940s and early 1950s, Ayatollah Behbehani controlled a clerical-political machine in Tehran that mediated between the clergy

and the government,³⁰ and in Qom Ayatollah Hosein Borujerdi, the recognized head (*marja-e-taqlid*) of the Shias since 1948, was trying to keep conflict with the government at a minimum. []

Borujerdi, whose interests ran more to theological education and legal interpretation than to politics, let Behbehani run the political activities. The Behbehani machine, composed mostly of lower ranking clergymen, was a power in Tehran politics and elections. At one time he controlled a bloc of 15 deputies in Parliament. During the Mossadeq premiership Behbehani ran into trouble with the Prime Minister and with Ayatollah Kashani, who refused to give him the kickbacks on government contracts and the influence in Parliament to which he felt entitled. As a result Behbehani threw his support to the Shah in the latter's struggle with Mossadeq. In spite of this support, Behbehani failed to regain his prerogatives after Mossadeq's replacement by General Zahedi.

Behbehani remained a power to be reckoned with, but over the next decade his influence slowly dwindled. []

For a decade after the overthrow of Mossadeq there was little more than skirmishing between the government and the clergy. The government held the upper hand, and the more important religious leaders kept a low profile. Some religious leaders talked about organizing to oppose the government, but there is no information to show that anything was accomplished. During Ramadan 1958 there were sermons attacking the government. This was noteworthy only because this had not occurred for several years. Such sermons, however, were directed at the government and not at the Shah directly. Religious influence continued to be exerted on a local level. Low-ranking mullahs sometimes made antigovernment statements, usually to their disadvantage. In places like Mashhad, where religious influence was strong, this made itself felt in local affairs such as the ban on public sale of alcoholic beverages, the organization of religious schools, and the closing of movie houses during the religious mourning periods. During this period there was a pamphlet distributed criticizing the Shah for his oil policy and articles denouncing the presence of Americans. Clerical pressure is credited with helping to kill

³⁰ The Behbehani family's political importance in Tehran dated back to 1906, and the Ayatollah's son and other relatives served in Parliament in many sessions. (u)

25X1 an early land reform bill and abort tentative proposals to give women the vote and wider employment opportunities.³¹ []

25X1 In the early 1960s, however, the Shah opened his campaign for economic and social reform, and the clergy felt the impact. Ali Amini had become prime minister in 1961. That same year Ayatollah Borujerdi died, and his policy of getting along with the government fell into abeyance. Ayatollah Behbehani was losing control of his Tehran apparatus, and Amini tried to break up the Behbehani machine, threatening to reveal the clergy's corrupt handling of land entrusted to them. As a last resort, Amini had Behbehani's politician-son arrested. Although the son was jailed for only a few days, the episode turned Behbehani against Amini and the Shah. []

25X1 In 1962 the Amini government initiated a land reform program that attacked both the landlords and the clergy. The land controlled by the clergy was not subject to distribution in the first phase. Later, however, clerical-controlled lands were distributed through the device of 99-year leases rather than outright sale to the farmers. Income from land provided a significant portion of the income that the clergy used for religious purposes. Just before the January 1963 referendum, which the Shah held to demonstrate popular support for his policies, he went to Qom. He confronted the clergy, calling them parasites and telling them that he was better qualified than they to interpret Islam for the nation. The next month the Shah granted suffrage to Iranian women. []

25X1 After the referendum there were a variety of clerical actions. Leaflets were distributed in Tehran attacking the Shah, the regime, and the reform program, and the funerals of some persons connected with the National Front were used as opportunities to demonstrate religious orthodoxy and opposition to the Shah. At the end of Ramadan on 26 February 1963, about 5,000 *bazaaris* went to Qom and heard religious exhortations with thinly veiled antigovernment overtones. Ayatollah Behbehani was denounced on this occasion because of his past reputation as a royal supporter. The Tehran

³¹ One unexpected clerical opponent of the 1960 land reform bill was Hassan Emami, the Imam Jume'h of Tehran, a position to which he was appointed by the Shah. Emami was always part of the Shah's entourage. (U)

clergy boycotted the Shah's reception always held at the end of Ramadan. The clergy was traditionally invited and normally attended this ceremony. Just before *Now Ruz* (new year) in late March that year, leaflets were distributed urging that mourning ceremonies be substituted for the usual *Now Ruz* celebrations. This was supported by all important Iranian clergymen. Statements by Ayatollahs Milani, Qomi, and Shirazi from An Najaf (the main Shia religious center in Iraq) opposing equal political rights for women were posted in the shrine in Mashhad, in the Tehran bazaar, and in Qom. The National Front also posted proclamations against the government in the same places. Demonstrations were suppressed in several cities, and the government sent 1,500 uniformed but unarmed troops to Qom in a show of force. []

25X1 One of the leaflets distributed by Khomeini at this time included all the themes that he has continued to emphasize. The leaflet stated that the Koran and Islam were being destroyed "by the filthy hand of the foreigners" through the Shah's government. "We will be subjected to violation, thrown into jail, and destroyed in favor of Jews and Americans." Khomeini's remedy was removal of the regime and its replacement by one that would protect the people and rule by the Koran. []

25X1 **The Emergence of Khomeini.** The secularizing policies of the Pahlavis for the last 50 years have obscured the fact that the clergy has always claimed to be the natural leader of the masses and that many Iranians, although not the most highly educated, have recognized this role. The Safavid dynasty based its claim to leadership on the religious credentials of its founder, although the Safavids rapidly took on the role of the traditional Iranian monarch rather than of the "just jurisprudent" of Shiite theory. Even in the Pahlavi period, the peasant or the man in the street would be more likely to consult his clergyman than a government official on his problems, whether religious or secular. Clergymen thus frequently filled leadership roles on a grass-roots level where government was considered to be not the servant but the master of the people. The emergence of a strong religious leader on a national level was inevitable. In past decades the government has often been in serious trouble, but there was no religious leader available to exploit the trouble.

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Conversely, a number of respected and powerful religious leaders have had no impact on a national political level because of government supremacy. []

In 1963 Khomeini moved into a position that he later parlayed into the supreme leadership as a result of clerical intrigues and government mishandling of the clergy. When Borujerdi died in 1960, Behbehani had no chance of becoming the new *marja-e-taqlid*.³² He, however, hoped to dictate the choice of Borujerdi's successor, who would be in effect Behbehani's tool. []

Behbehani first selected a Najafi cleric who soon died. Behbehani then turned to Khomeini, whom he apparently considered to be weak and pliable. Ayatollah Borujerdi had designated Khomeini to handle the funds for the support of religious students in the committee that guided religious affairs after Borujerdi died. []

In mid-1962 Behbehani began to activate his organization in support of Khomeini, and many in the religious community swung to the Behbehani-Khomeini coalition. The Shah opposed this coalition, probably more because of Behbehani than Khomeini, who was little known outside of Qom. Ayatollah Hakim of An Najaf, whom some Shias considered the best candidate to succeed Borujerdi, also opposed Behbehani because of his political activities. Ayatollah Shariatmadari was also a strong contender for the position. []

The bazaar, always subject to political and religious incitement, was drawn to Behbehani and Khomeini by the economic recession that was threatening its livelihood. The replacement of Prime Minister Amini by Amir Asadollah Alam in June 1962 did not improve things, and the bazaar's enmity was directed as much at the Shah as at Alam. []

In early 1963 the religious leaders took advantage of the government's increasing political and economic difficulties to open a new campaign. They formed a committee in Qom to coordinate this campaign.³³ []

³² The Point of Imitation, the title given to the recognized leader of the Shiites. (U)

³³ The members of this committee were Ayatollahs Shariatmadari, Khomeini, Golpaygani, Morteza Hairi, Mohammad Yazdi, Hashem Ameli, Mohammad Hosein Tabatabai, and Tunakaboni. (U)

Khomeini and the clergy in general began attacking the Shah personally, a confrontation that had usually been avoided in the past. A major theme was that the Shah had become a puppet of the Bahais, a sect that in turn was controlled by the Jews.³⁴ []

When the Shah heard about the campaign against him, and especially that it was having a significant effect on public attitudes, he ordered his security officials to study the problem. They recommended that the government's campaign against the clergy be curtailed and that anticlerical activity should be carried on by newspapers and individuals. Nevertheless, the Shah insisted that he would not change the policies of the reform program nor would he stop trying to reduce the influence of the clergy. []

In June 1963 Khomeini preached a sermon that was such a direct attack on the Shah that it could not be ignored. He and several other clergymen were arrested in Qom and taken to Tehran. Immediately riots broke out in Tehran and several other cities. The riots were subdued with a heavy loss of life, but Khomeini had become a national hero. The government tried to blame the riots on the landlords who had been dispossessed (there was some landlord involvement), on the exiled former chief of SAVAK (the National Intelligence and Security Organization) Gen. Teymur Bakhtiar, who may have played a role,³⁵ and on Egyptian instigation, which probably was not true.³⁶ []

An attempt was made by some members of the clergy and by the government to resolve their differences. Ayatollah Shariatmadari was active in these efforts as were Ayatollahs Golpaygani, Milani, and Khonsari. Ayatollah Mehdi Haeri-Yazdi, who 15 years later was Khomeini's representative in the Iranian Embassy in

³⁴ The only person well-known as a Bahai who was of Jewish origin was Habib Sabet, a wealthy businessman. []

³⁵ General Bakhtiar moved from Europe through Lebanon to Baghdad shortly before the riots. He had been in touch with Tudeh Party leaders apparently in some sort of anti-Shah planning. There is no direct evidence that he was involved in the June riots, but he may have been aware that something was going on. The riots clearly had been planned. []

³⁶ The day of the riots an Egyptian was arrested at Tehran airport. He was carrying large sums of money, which the press played as payoff money for the rioters. SAVAK chief General Pakravan told the writer that the man was a well-known currency smuggler who had made several trips to Iran. The General believed his arrival at that time was fortuitous. []

Washington, served as a go-between in some of these meetings. The negotiations finally collapsed over the clergy's insistence that Khomeini be released and that the government of Prime Minister Alam be dissolved. The Shah offered to release Khomeini and other clerical leaders if they would go into exile quietly. The clergy refused. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Khomeini's movement fell dormant after this. Little was heard from him. He was released from house arrest in April 1964 with a stern warning against getting involved in political activity. Khomeini was inactive during the *Moharram* period in June of that year. Apparently, however, he felt the need to make himself known again or lose his following, and in September he resumed teaching in Qom. [REDACTED]

In early August 1963 Khomeini and other religious leaders were released from jail and held under house arrest. They were permitted to receive visitors, but not to make speeches. An item in *Ettela'at* newspaper suggests a reason for this:

As a mutual understanding has been reached between the security authorities and Messrs. Khomeini, Qomi, and Mahallati to the effect that they will not interfere in political affairs and that they will not act against the interests of the country and its security, and as this mutual understanding is completely acceptable, they have been moved to their private homes.³⁷ [REDACTED]

The clerics decided not to oppose overtly the *majlis* elections in September 1963 even though some, such as Ayatollah Hadi Milani and Khomeini, had wanted to put up militant opposition and declare the elections forbidden. Instead, the clergy decided to support candidates sympathetic to religion and then try to persuade the new parliament to organize the five-man clerical review panel that the constitution called for.

The next move was a turning point in Khomeini's career. A Status of Forces bill was debated—and eventually passed—by Parliament. This bill gave the American forces in Iran a juridical status in conformance with the Vienna Convention. It was widely publicized, however, as a reimposition of the old capitulations, which had exempted foreigners from local law in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The bill was ineptly handled by the government. Khomeini seized the opportunity and in speeches and handbills attacked the government and the United States and called on the army to overthrow the government. [REDACTED]

The clergy failed to have any impact on the elections, and in September 1963 religious leaders agreed to the revival of the Fedayan-e-Islam, the terrorist organization that had virtually disappeared with the execution of its top leaders in 1955. A letter to the religious leaders from Khomeini was probably instrumental in this move. He criticized the other clergymen for boycotting the elections and insisted that if they had vigorously attacked the elections and staged demonstrations, many of the successful candidates would have failed, and "certainly six women would not have been elected." [REDACTED]

This was more than the government could tolerate. Khomeini was again arrested and exiled to Turkey. A year later he moved to the Shia center of An Najaf in Iraq, from which he continued his campaign against the Iranian Government. In this he had the tacit approval, if not active support, of the Iraqis, for during this period Iran and Iraq were at loggerheads over a variety of issues, including the Shatt al Arab boundary problem and the Kurds. [REDACTED]

Throughout the last half of the 1960s and into the 1970s conflict continued to simmer between the government and the Shia religious community, only rarely breaking into open hostilities. The government made occasional attempts to approach religious leaders to try to smooth over their difficulties, and for their part, some of the religious leaders were receptive. But neither side was able to change its basic demands. The religious leaders wanted a slowdown or a reversal of the Shah's reform programs and a recognition that

³⁷ *Ettela'at*, 5 August 1963. (U)

Islam must play a role in supervising civil affairs. They also wanted a campaign against corruption³⁸ and a reversal of Iran's policy toward Israel. The government and the Shah for their part were committed to the reform programs as being the only route to modernization and rejected the religious leaders' claim to a voice in government policy. On each side there was an additional complicating factor. Khomeini and his followers were always available to make sure that the more moderate religious leaders did not compromise, and on the government side, the hard line followed by the security forces created hostility against the government that became ineradicable. []

Not all the clergy were militantly political. A significant number were following the policy of "silence" (*sokut*) described by one of them as "our duty is to advise, not to fight." The late Ayatollah Hakim of Qom subscribed to this philosophy as did Ayatollahs Golpaygani, Khonsari, and Shahrudi. The policy is said to have been formulated by ayatollahs prominent in the two decades between 1940 and 1960—Behbehani, Borujerdi, and Kashani.³⁹ This policy, however, fairly describes the attitude of Ayatollah Haeri, who practically single-handed, had revived Qom as a theological center in the 1920s and 1930s. His quietism and refusal to be drawn into political problems provided some problems for the more activist clergy, who revered him for his work but were troubled by his passivity in the face of government provocations. Haeri was, one ayatollah concluded, interested primarily in protecting Islam and its institutions from the retaliation that would follow if he took an open stand against the government.⁴⁰ []

Government Efforts To Control the Clergy. Skirmishes continued between religious elements and the government in the following years. Ayatollah Taleqani, who had spent many years in prison or exile, was finally released only to be continually harrassed by the

³⁸ The Shah conducted many campaigns against corruption. None of those who were most guilty from the point of view of the religious leaders suffered. Habib Elghanian, the Jewish businessman executed after Khomeini's victory had served a year for price-gouging about two years earlier. (U)

³⁹ W. G. Millward, "Aspects of Modernism in Shi'a Islam," *Studia Islamica*, vol. 37 (1973), p. 115. (U)

⁴⁰ Razi, *Asar al-Hujja*, p. 88f. (U)

authorities. On one occasion two of his sons were arrested. They were released a few days later.⁴¹ [] 25X1

The Shah toyed with several ideas for bringing the clergy under tighter government supervision. He contemplated trying to introduce a reformed educational system for the clergy and to certify and pay them like regular employees, and he considered creating a cabinet post for religious affairs. Later a cabinet post for endowments was formed to try to centralize the administration of the endowments. [] 25X1

In 1970 the Shah proposed the formation of a Religious Corps that would draft religious students into the military and assign them as mullahs in the villages. The religious community refused to have anything to do with the idea. The opposition of the normally apolitical Ayatollah Seyed Ahmad Khonsari was probably decisive in this case. [] 25X1

Early in 1972 chances for rapprochement between the government and religious leaders seemed improved. Baghdad and Tehran were in the midst of hostilities over Iran's support for Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq. Iraq had retaliated by expelling Iranians from Iraq. This involved many Iranian clergymen in An Najaf and Karbala. For the first time the Iranian Government and the religious community were united in their opposition to Iraq's action. This brief honeymoon ended abruptly when Senator Jamshid Alam, a crony of the Shah, attacked Khomeini in a senate speech for not intervening with the Iraqi Government to aid the Iranian community. [] 25X1

[] A few days later the popular Tehran preacher Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Falsafi strongly criticized the government during a sermon at one of the most important mosques in Tehran. [] 25X1

In early February 1972 a SAVAK official in Qom told Ayatollah Golpaygani that the religious community was going to come under the control of the endowments

⁴¹ Ironically, Taleqani's sons were also arrested some six years later by Ayatollah Khomeini's *Komiteh*, apparently on the suspicion that they were Marxists. One son, Mojtaba, seems to have been a member of a splinter group of the Mujahadin-e-Khalq-e-Iran. (U)

department. Golpaygani indignantly rejected the idea, pointing out that the religious community had always been independent. A couple of days later the students at the Feyzieh School in Qom rioted. As usual, the rioters were subdued by the security forces with beatings and clubbings, and the normal state of hostility between the government and the clergy resumed [redacted]

Ayatollah Shariatmadari remained at least sporadically hopeful that differences could be resolved. His outlook was at times so optimistic that he was accused of being progovernment. His attitude changed, however, in the summer of 1972 after an incident in Qom. In late April of that year, some 50 relatives of religious and political arrestees went to Qom, took refuge in Shariatmadari's home, and remained for nearly a week. Finally the house was surrounded by security troops and, when the *bastis* refused to leave, troops entered and dispersed them. This incident, which also resulted in demonstrations by theological students, had a strong effect on Shariatmadari. Traditionally, the homes of the great *mujtaheds* have been considered places of refuge (*bast*) and are inviolate.⁴² [redacted]

The government's action was not only offensive to Shariatmadari personally but also—at least in his eyes—an offense against religion. He retaliated by making a speech at Feyzieh School in which he noted that he had not supported Khomeini in 1963 because he was against all kinds of disorders and demonstrations. Furthermore, he believed that the government was pursuing a genuine reform program. Now, however, he saw that he had been wrong. He repented of his mistakes and asked God's forgiveness. Thus, by a clumsy handling of a relatively minor incident, the government turned one of the few influential progovernment Ayatollahs into a supporter of Khomeini. [redacted]

Later that year the Hosseinieh Ershad, a mosque built around 1962 originally with SAVAK money, was closed by the authorities. Although the incident was confused, one version describes an inflammatory speech made by Ali Shariati which resulted in large demonstrations. Shariati was arrested but released the

⁴² The tombs of the imams and their descendants (*Imamzadehs*) are also places of *bast*. (U)

next day.⁴³ Hosseinieh Ershad, which had become the center of antigovernment propaganda, remained closed for the next six years. [redacted]

Meanwhile Khomeini, exiled for almost a decade in An Najaf, continued his campaign against the Shah. There is little detail available on his activities during this period. He continued his preaching and teaching. His book on *Islamic Government*, probably the definitive statement of Khomeini's views on the subject, was published in 1968. This work, in both Arabic and Persian, had a significant impact on the thinking of Khomeini's followers. [redacted]

In late 1972 the government seemed relatively relaxed. The occasional brushups with the clergy were troublesome but not dangerous. The Shah was willing to try to pacify them as long as this did not compromise his basic goals. The clergy were, after all, the one group the Shah had not been able to subdue. The government resumed issuing permits for sermons to clergymen that had been denied them. Banned preachers were permitted to resume their work. Mosques were repaired, and new religious buildings were financed by the government. [redacted]

But whatever these religious leaders might have thought, Khomeini's followers were not as patient. The next summer a large demonstration—by members of the guerrilla organization the Mujahidin-e-Khalq (the Peoples Warriors), Khomeini followers—broke out again at the religious schools in Qom. One hundred of the 270 arrested in hand-to-hand fighting were held for trial. [redacted]

⁴³ Although Shariati had been influential among religiously-inclined intellectuals for a decade, he was so little known to the US official community that he was mis-identified as an Ayatollah "who was sometimes called Shariatzadeh." (U)

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In the following years the government made little effort to approach or placate the religious community. The growing preponderance of Khomeini's followers and the activities of the religiously oriented terrorist group, the Mujahidin-e-Khalq, foreclosed what little sentiment might have existed for rapprochement. Politically and religiously the ground was being prepared for the events of 1978-79.



Figure 3.
Pro-Khomeini demonstration 1979

Unclassified ©

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Part II: The Fundamentals of Shia Islam

Origins of the Shia

Because the events of the early decades of Islam are alive to today's Shia leaders and because they, in their several ways, want to model Iran on the original, pure Islam as they understand it, a little history is needed at this point.

Muhammad was born in Mecca around the year 571. When he died 61 years later, the religion that he had founded in 612 had begun to unify the diverse tribes of the Arabian peninsula. A century later the expanding Muslim empire reached from France to India and Central Asia. During the next 750 years the Muslim world constantly challenged and often surpassed Europe in the Mediterranean. The work of its doctors, philosophers, mathematicians, and astronomers provided models for European medieval scholars, and many of the Greek philosophers have been preserved only because of translations into Arabic.

The Crusades marked only one of a long series of violent encounters between the Muslim and Christian worlds. The Crusades are now little more than a historical curiosity for educated Westerners, but for many Muslims the Crusades are still seen as a motivating factor in relations between the Muslim and Christian worlds. For people like Ayatollah Khomeini the whole meaning of relations between the Muslim and Western worlds is a single-minded attempt by the latter to destroy Islam—the only bar to Christian-Jewish hegemony.

There have been divisions and differences within Islam from the earliest years that have contributed greatly to the problems of the Muslim world—problems arising not only from religious differences, but also from political and dynastic struggles for which Islam was more an excuse than a cause. Iranian religious ideologists such as Ayatollah Khomeini and the secular sociologist Ali Shariati seek to reestablish Islam as they think it existed before it was debased by secular government and defeated by Christian intrigues. For them this period ended with the death of Ali.

Figure 4

Selected Dates in the Early History of Islam

571 (approximate)	Muhammad born at Mecca.
610 (or earlier)	Muhammad has first revelation.
622	Muhammad flees from Mecca to Medina. The Muslim calendar begins with this flight (<i>hijra</i>).
632	Death of Muhammad.
632-661	The orthodox caliphates of Abu Bekr, Omar, and Othman.
642	The last of the Sassanian Persian shahs is defeated by the Muslims.
732	Muslims defeated at Tours and Poitiers in France. This was deepest penetration into Europe until Ottomans besieged Vienna in the 17th century.

The above information is Unclassified.

As soon as Muhammad died in 632, a dispute arose as to his legitimate successor. Within a generation this dispute turned into a major schism that has divided the Muslim world for the last 13 centuries and has had widespread political consequences.

The first group were those who insisted that the successor (*Khalifa*) should be chosen according to Arab tribal custom by agreement of the community. These came to be called *Sunni*, from Arabic *Sunna* (custom or usage). The second group, the Shia or "partisans" (of Ali), was much smaller. The Shia believed that Muhammad should be followed by his son-in-law and cousin Ali ibn Abu-Talib, who, Shiite traditions say, was the first male convert to Islam.

The first group won, and during the next 25 years three caliphs ruled the rapidly expanding Muslim world. This was a period of almost constant warfare not only against the Byzantine and Persian Empires into which

"A Shiite *hadith* (tradition) holds that when Muhammad was returning from his farewell pilgrimage to Mecca, he stopped at a place called Ghadir Kum, where he told his followers that he wanted Ali to be his successor. The Sunnis deny this tradition. The day (Zil-Hujja 18, by the Muslim calendar) is celebrated as a religious holiday in Iran. (U)

the Muslims were expanding but against internal enemies. Two of the first three caliphs were assassinated, starting a long and persistent tradition. Finally, nearly 25 years after Muhammad's death, Ali was chosen as the fourth caliph. He had served his predecessors faithfully, but his four years were marked by continuing warfare. []

Ali's right to the caliphate was challenged by Muawiya, the governor of Damascus who was supported by Muhammad's wife Aisha.⁴⁵ This dispute was fought out in Iraq, where both sides had a strong following. Troops of Muawiya and Ali fought two bloody battles. As Ali was on the verge of victory, some of Muawiya's soldiers raised a copy of the Koran on the point of a spear. All fighting immediately stopped. Muawiya took advantage of the lull to ask for a truce, which Ali granted. This was prolonged, and negotiations for a settlement were started. By a ruse one of Muawiya's negotiators persuaded Ali to renounce the caliphate, claiming that Muawiya would at the same time renounce his claim. Ali did so, but Muawiya's negotiator immediately announced that since the caliphate was now empty, he nominated Muawiya. Negotiations broke down, and fighting resumed. A portion of Ali's supporters rebelled, claiming that he had no right to submit to arbitration, and since he had done so, had forfeited his right to the caliphate. It was one of these "Outlaws," as they were called that stabbed Ali to death two years later. He was buried in An Najaf. This was the first of many splits among the Shiites. []

From this point the Sunni caliphate and the Shia imamate diverged. The Sunnis (who today constitute 90 percent of all Muslims) continued their caliphate through many vicissitudes down to 1924, when the post was abolished—along with the Ottoman sultanate—by

⁴⁵ Aisha had a longstanding grudge against Ali. The incident that created the grudge also produced one of the more important pieces of Muslim social legislation. Twenty-five years earlier Aisha, then about 16, was with Muhammad on one of his raids. On the way home Aisha lingered behind to look for a necklace she had lost. When she returned to the camp, she found that the party had left without her. A young man passing by offered her a ride on his camel, which he then led to the camp. There was much unfavorable comment. Ali advised Muhammad to put Aisha aside. Muhammad apparently did not believe the gossip and received the revelation recorded in the Koran Sura 24, v.4, "And those who accuse honorable women but bring not four witnesses, scourge them with 80 stripes and never afterward accept their testimony. They indeed are evildoers." Aisha never seems to have forgiven Ali for his attitude. (U)

Figure 5

Selected Dates in the History of the Shiites

656-661	Ali rules as fourth caliph and first imam of the Shias.
661	Ali murdered.
680	Imam Hosein killed at battle of Karbala. This occurred on the 10th day of the Muslim month of <i>Moharram</i> . This month and especially the 10th day is a major period of mourning for the Shias.
731-765	Reign of the sixth imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq. So many traditions and legal rulings come from this period that the majority school of the Shia, which is the official religion of Iran, is often called the Ja'fari School.
799-818	Rule of the eighth imam Reza, whose tomb in Mashhad is a major pilgrimage center.
878	The 12th imam, the infant Muhammad al-Muntazar (the Mahdi) disappears in a cave in Samarra. Shias hold that he was taken to paradise and that he will appear at the end of time to restore peace and justice in the world.

The above information is Unclassified.

Ataturk. The Shia continued to follow the descendants of Ali down to 878, when the 12th imam disappeared. Shiite theology holds that when this *Mahdi* reappears, the world will be filled with justice. []

This brief description focuses on only the most obvious reason for the Sunni-Shia split. This political aspect is more easily understood than the less tangible factors that were probably as important, and perhaps more so, in motivating the mass popular support for the party of Ali. []

Less tangible factors were also the main elements in the success of Ayatollah Khomeini's campaign against the Shah. Economic, social, and political grievances were the terms in which the more articulate of the opposition voiced their complaints. The theological and philosophical opposition of the Schoolmen which provided the religious justification for clerical leaders had little direct impact in motivating the masses. The sermons and leaflets directed to the public appealed not to the intellect but to the emotions of a people for whom religion is a story of struggle and martyrdom,

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whose principal holidays are celebrations of defeat not who advanced his own claim to the caliphate. (There joy, and for whom jinns are an everpresent reality.⁴⁶ [] were two other claimants.) []

25X1

At least two major disputes later divided the Shiites. One was over the succession of the fifth imam. Those who split off at that time are called the Zaidis and are now found mostly in Yemen. The other argument was over the succession of the seventh imam. These "Seveners" are the Ismailis who gave birth to the Order of the Assassins. They are represented today by the followers of the Agha Khan. There were also theological differences that motivated these disputes, but they are not relevant here. []

25X1

Of the 12 imams recognized by the dominant sect of the Shia, two need to be mentioned. These are the two sons of Ali (grandsons of Muhammad), Hasan and Hosein. After Ali was murdered, Muawiya was declared caliph. Hasan, Ali's oldest son, called upon the Iraqis for support, but Muawiya opened negotiations with him, and Hasan agreed to withdraw in exchange for a generous pension. []

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For the next 19 years Muawiya ruled without challenge. He transformed the caliphate from a simple position of first among equals to a hereditary monarchy with many of the trappings of the neighboring Byzantine Empire. Muawiya designated his son Yazid to succeed him. When Yazid took office, opposition to the rule of his family arose once more. The most prominent opponent was Ali's younger son Hosein,

⁴⁶ The concept of jinns (the genies of the Arabian Nights) is not merely a popular superstition, although the learned and the ignorant might view it differently. A distinguished Shia Sufi philosopher

wrote that "to understand the . . . jinn one must . . . go beyond a conception of reality that includes only the world of matter and the mind (this paralyzing dualism that makes an understanding of traditional doctrines impossible) to an awareness of a hierarchic reality made up of the three worlds of spirit, psyche, and matter." As man exists in the world of matter, the jinn exists in the psychic world. Man was made of clay into which God breathed life. Jinns are made of fire into which God breathed life. Unlike man, jinns can appear in different forms, but like man they possess responsibility before God. Some are religious and Muslim, but others are forces that rebelled against God; they are the "Armies of Satan." The evil jinn is the most prevalent in the popular mind. They appear as concrete physical figures of varying shapes, and man seeks spiritual aid against them by incantations, usually of the Koran. (Seyed Hosein Nasr, "A Note on the Jinn," in Tabatabai, *Shiite Islam*, pp.

235-237. For a description of jinns as they appeared to villagers, see Robert Alberts, *Social Structure and Cultural Change in an Iranian Village*, University of Wisconsin Ph.D. dissertation 1963., Chapter 23. (u)

Yazid's troops and the greatly outnumbered followers of Hosein met on the plain of Karbala in Iraq on the 10th of *Moharram*, 680. Hosein and all his followers were slaughtered, an incident that is commemorated every year by the Shias with ceremonies of mourning, parades, and dramatic productions recreating the "Tragedy of Karbala."⁴⁷ For many years the *Moharram* ceremonies have been used as political occasions with the Shah implicitly—and sometimes explicitly—compared to the tyrant Yazid and the Iranian masses playing the role of the martyred Hosein.⁴⁸ []

25X1

The Shiites were not destroyed by the massacre of Hosein. Instead their faith was strengthened, but they had little political power. The 12th and last imam disappeared in a cave in Samarra, Iraq in 878. His return is awaited by the Shias as the beginning of a reign of peace and justice. For the next 70 years, the Hidden Imam was visible only to four "agents" of the imam. When the last one died, there was no further communication with the imam. []

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This "absence" has had a significant impact on the Shia attitude toward church-state relations. With the imam absent there was no legitimate government, and it was not even necessary to work for reform or a change in government because that too could only be illegitimate. Since a regime is not perfect, the way is left open for action in the future. A Western scholar wrote in 1960 that "such an attitude might often be politically harmless, but there lurked in it a potential danger. A change of circumstances might suggest to the adherents of the movement that the time for action had come." This seems to be what happened in 1978. []

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In the centuries that followed, Shiism became firmly entrenched, especially in the eastern part of the caliphate, Persia and Iraq. []

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⁴⁷ See appendix A for a discussion of this important day of mourning. (u)

⁴⁸ Ayatollah Khomeini was first arrested in 1963 for making this specific comparison. (u)

⁴⁹ W. Montgomery Watt, "Shiism under the Umayyads", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1960), p. 161f. (u)

Many of the troubles that afflicted Islam arose from Arabic-Persian rivalry, which roughly paralleled the Sunni-Shia split. For a hundred years in the 8th and 9th centuries a Persian Shiite dynasty ruled much of Iraq and western Iran, appointing the caliphs in Baghdad and marrying into the caliphal family. It was under this dynasty that the ancient title *shahanshah* was resumed and Shiite festivals, including *Moharram*, were established as public festivals. []

25X1

Shiism reached its present position in Iran in the 16th century when the Safavids established themselves as the rulers of Iran. The Safavids originated in a Shia dervish order established at Ardebil in Azarbayjan. Through intermarriage with a ruling Turkish tribe (Turks and Mongols had overrun Iran in previous centuries) the head of the order achieved political and military power. His son launched a military campaign against the Turkish tribes, which in 20 years gave him control over much of Persia. During the next 300 years there were frequent wars between the Persians and the Turks reflecting not only ethnic rivalry,⁵⁰ but also Shia-Sunni rivalry and dynastic ambitions. []

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Under the Safavids Persia for the first time in a thousand years had a Persian ruler—speaking Persian rather than Arabic or Turkish—a unique religion, Shiism, and an opportunity to develop its own cultural identity. The Twelver Shiite creed established by the Safavids as the official religion of Iran has continued dominant to the present. []

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Shiite Theology

Shiite theology need not be discussed in detail but some points need to be kept in mind. The Shiites believe in five principles of religion (*usul al-din*):

- The absolute oneness of God.
- He has sent many messengers, the last one was Muhammad.
- Resurrection.
- The doctrine of the absolute justice of God and the doctrine of divine bounty.
- The doctrine of *imamate*.

The first three principles are held by all Muslims; the last two only by the Shiites. Muhammad is called the

⁵⁰ Conflict between Iran and Turan, Persian and Turk, is a major theme of Ferdowsi's epic poem the *Shahnameh*, already nearly 500 years old by the time the Safavids arose. (U)

messenger of God. There have been other messengers, among them Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Their messages were valid for their times, but all have been superceded by Muhammad, who is the final messenger. []

25X1

The justice of God is that justice on earth that is produced by the application of the Shariah. It is not abstract divine justice but is concrete justice that results from following God's instructions. []

25X1

The doctrine of *imamate*, as has already been noted, is the single most important difference between Sunnis and Shiites. The majority of the Shia believe that Muhammad ranks above Ali, the first imam who is sinless, infallible, and incapable of error, not only in public acts but also in private ones. For the Shiites the last imam—the *Mahdi*—is the *Hujja*, the proof of God, he is the upholder of the command of God, and the lord of the age. He is deathless and has miraculously remained alive since his absence.⁵¹ He will return to fill the earth with justice and equity. In the meantime the *mujtaheds* speak for the absent imam.⁵² []

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The five duties of a Muslim are well known:

- The profession of faith, "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God." To this the Shiites add "and Ali is the friend of God."
- Daily prayer. There are five required prayers. In practice, some of these are combined, reducing prayer to three occasions during the day.
- Pilgrimage to Mecca. Hajj is obligatory at least once a lifetime for every Muslim who is physically and financially able.
- Fasting during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the lunar year.
- Almsgiving, technically one-fortieth of one's annual income to be spent on the poor, the needy, those employed in its collection, and other categories. []

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⁵¹ "The opponents of Shiism protest that . . . the Hidden Imam should by now be nearly 12 centuries old, whereas this is impossible for any human being. In answer it must be said that the protest is based only on the unlikelihood of such an occurrence, not its impossibility." Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, *Shiite Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), p. 213. This is a reply to the anti-Shiite Ahmad Kasravi, who in a 1944 pamphlet argued that no man can live 1,000 years, and if the 12th imam actually existed, he should have come into the open and fulfilled his religious duty. (U)

⁵² The role of the *mujtaheds* is discussed in more detail later. (U)

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There is an additional requirement levied on Shiites which might be subsumed under point five. This is *khums*, a religious tax paid to the family of the Prophet which was discontinued by the Sunnis after Muhammad's death. The Shiites maintain it, however, as payable to the "People of the House" of Muhammad, that is to Ali and his descendants, the imams. The clergy, acting in the absence of the imam, receive this tax. Technically, it is one-fifth of yearly cash income, half of which goes to support poor descendants of the Prophet (that is, the Seyeds) and half to be spent at the *mujtaheds'* discretion. [This is the source of most of the money that the *bazaaris* provided to Khomeini. It is also the "one-fifth tax" that Khomeini refers to as providing the financial basis of the Islamic state.⁵³ The Koranic authority is the Shia interpretation of Sura 8, v. 41, "And know that whatever ye take as spoils of war, lo! a fifth thereof is for Allah, and for the messenger, and for the kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the traveler, if ye believe in Allah and that which we revealed unto our slave on the day of discrimination. . . ."]

The Clergy

The Setting

Two of the great centers of Shiite learning are at An Najaf in Iraq and Qom in Iran. An Najaf takes precedence because of its antiquity—a center of religious education for a thousand years according to one authority⁵⁴—and its proximity to the most holy places of Shia Islam, the Mosque of Ali at Kufa, three miles away, and the grave of Hosein at Karbala. Sammara, Kazimain, and Karbala, all in Iraq, also have schools of lesser importance and there are schools of local importance in most Iranian cities of any size.

An Najaf. The theological complex of An Najaf is to the Shia what Al-Azhar is to the Sunnis, and the education of a serious scholar is not complete until he has studied at An Najaf. All the outstanding theologians and *mujtaheds* have had long periods of residence there either as students or teachers, often as

⁵³ See Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, JPRS 72663, 19 Jan 1979, p. 11 ff. A collection of his traditional Islamic views on finances and taxes is available in Ayatollah Khomeini, *Principes politiques, philosophiques, sociaux et religieux*. (Jean-Marie Xaviere (ed), Paris: Editions Libres-Hallier, 1979), p. 151 ff. (u)

⁵⁴ Al-Asafi, *The School of An Najaf*. (u)

both simultaneously. Many ordinary clerics take advantage of the pilgrimage to the holy places in Iraq to attend lectures at An Najaf, providing them with additional prestige.⁵⁵

An Najaf has about 24 colleges, among them Borujerdi, Seyed Kazim Ali Tazdi, Akhund, Hindi, Qawam, Sadr, Ahmadyeh, and Mahdiah. There is no fee charged at these schools and no staff except for a janitor. Anyone of any standard of scholarship can live and study there as long as he can find a room. The number of students fluctuates, but is generally between 2,000 and 3,000 from all parts of the Shia world and as far away as Tibet.

The student may remain as long as he likes, but 15 years seems to be an average stay. Students depend on independent financing or on grants from religious leaders. Financial figures are difficult to obtain, but in 1957 Ayatollah Borujerdi of Qom was providing about \$17,000 per month for "bread money" to students at An Najaf. In addition, he was giving allowances to some 500 needy scholars totaling about \$5,500 per month. Some of these allowances were as low as \$5 or \$6 but a prominent, needy scholar might receive as much as \$80 to \$85, an allowance that compared favorably to Iraqi Government salaries of the time. This was probably only part of Borujerdi's expenses.⁵⁶ No current figures are available, but one can speculate that today's expenditures must be two to three times greater than the earlier amount.

The *ulema* of An Najaf were active against the British during and after World War I, and even carried arms in a *jihad*.⁵⁷ The 1920 Iraqi revolt against the British was led by the Shia *mujtaheds* of An Najaf, Karbala, and Kazimain, and the Wahhabi incursion into Iraq

⁵⁵ Mojtaba Mirlohi, better known by his nom de guerre Navab Safavi, the founder of the terrorist group Fedayan-e-Islam had an eighth grade secular education and received some religious education from an uncle. He spent a few months in Iraq and returned dressed in clerical garb. Although his scholarship was questioned, his status was not. There is no indication that he had any further theological education before his execution in 1955 at the age of 32. (u)

⁵⁶ Jamali, "The Theological Colleges of An Najaf," *Muslim World*, 50(1960), p. 15-22. (u)

⁵⁷ Sayyid Abul Qassem Kashani, who 30 years later became a leading figure in the oil nationalization under Mossadeq, was one of these. (u)

about this time was met by strong resistance from the Shia.⁵⁸ []

The elections that the newly enthroned King Faysal called in 1921 were boycotted by the *mujtaheds* who issued a *fatwah* to the effect that "Whoever participates in them or gives the slightest assistance will disobey God and His Prophet and saints." Attempts by the King and the British to engage the *ulema* in negotiations to compromise their differences failed. The *ulema* simply refused any discussion. []

Two of the clerical agitators were expelled from Iraq to Iran in 1923, and in protest several other high-ranking *mujtaheds* left for Iran, where they were well received by—among other Iranian officials—the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mossadeq-al-Saltaneh, 30 years later Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq. []

There is nothing on the record to indicate Reza Khan's reaction to this influx. He was then Minister of War, and it would be another five years before Reza Shah would have to confront the clergy. []

Shia religious writers remember how, when "the colonialistic Iraqi Government, on the command of its tyrannical masters . . . exiled these great spiritual leaders," they were met at the Iran-Iraq border by government officials and the Iranian *ulema* and escorted with "utmost pomp through the cities of Qasr-e Shirin, Kermanshah, Hamadan, Malayer, and Arak until they reached Qom."⁵⁹ They were well received by the leading clergyman of Qom, Ayatollah Abdol Karim Haeri, in accordance with their rank and dignity, but Haeri refrained from taking up their cause, to the disappointment of many clergymen of the time. []

During these events Khomeini was at Qom as a student and must have attended classes given by the exiled *mujtaheds* and heard their arguments and debates about the difficulties Islam was having under the rule

⁵⁸ The Wahhabis invaded Iraq at least three times in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the two earlier attacks Shia shrines at Karbala and An Najaf were destroyed and thousands of Shias were killed. These events, as well as theological differences, are behind Khomeini's occasional attacks on the Wahhabis whom he seems to consider only a shade better than Jews, Bahais, and Westerners. (U)

⁵⁹ Razi, *Asar al-Hujja*, p.22. (U)

of the British. Most of the exiles eventually returned to Iraq to resume their preaching and teaching. []

The *ulema* of An Najaf were no longer a direct threat to the Iraqi Government, but their "trials" are recorded: the trial of Egypt (the 1956 Anglo-French-Israeli invasion); the trial of the expansion of Communism, after the 1958 Iraqi revolution; the trial of personal conditions when "Abd al-Karim Qasim, on behalf of the imperialists, tried to renew the elimination of Islamic laws in the area of personal law . . . the tyrant insisted that the Muslims have recourse to the laws of the unbelievers"; and the Trial of Muslim Iran (1963) when "in An Najaf the *ulema* took a stand in opposition to the Iranian Government and sought to rectify the conditions of the *ulema* to secure their release and put an end to these barbaric acts." []

The difficulties of An Najaf in recent years have been recorded in current reporting. These include the expulsion of Iranians, many of them involved in the religious institutions, in 1970; attempts by Baghdad to mute Shiite religious observances, the expulsion of Khomeini; and the rise in Shia agitation in shrine cities of Iraq following the success of Khomeini's Islamic revolution. []

An Najaf clearly has considered itself part of an Islamic community in general and the Shia community in particular, rather than of the nation-state of Iraq. In this context whether a clergyman was Iranian or Iraqi has been irrelevant, and the struggle has been Shia Islam (sometimes Islam in general) against the godless secularizers; geography has been incidental. []

Qom. Qom, some 80 miles south of Tehran is the Shiite center in Iran. The largest number of outstanding schools are concentrated there, and the major Shiite figures either live there or spend much time there. Other cities have theological schools, but most of these provide terminal education for the local mullah or serve as preparation for studies in Qom and An Najaf. []

Approached from across the desert and from any direction, the first glimpse of Qom is the gilded dome over the Shrine of Fatemah, the sister of the eighth

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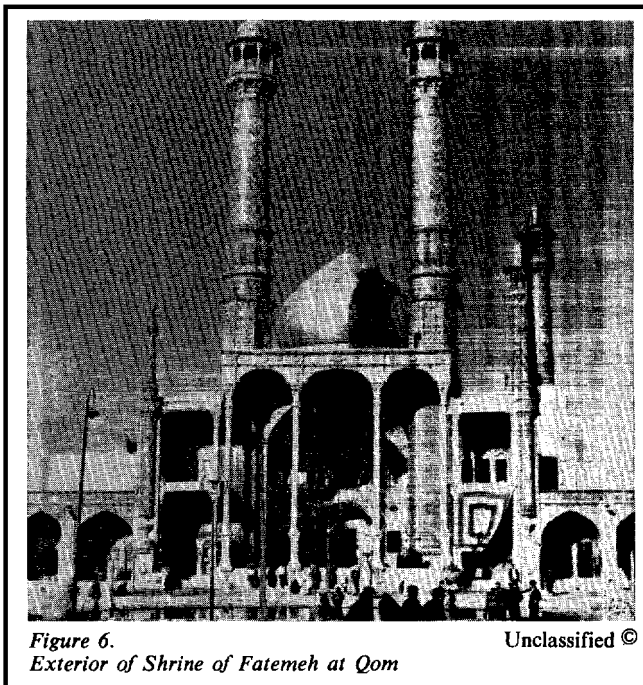


Figure 6.
Exterior of Shrine of Fatemeh at Qom

Unclassified ©

imam, who is buried there. This burial was in 861, but it was not until the 17th century that the city became a major pilgrimage center. At that time the Safavid dynasty, as a result of its rivalry with the Sunni Ottoman Empire, declared Twelver Shiism the state religion. The present Shrine was built by Shah Abas as part of the upgrading of Shia figures. Three Safavid shahs are buried in Qom, as are 444 descendants of the imams. Hassan al-Sabah, founder of the order of the Assassins, is said to have been born there. []

Qom has had a checkered history. It has been sacked by both Mongols and Afghans, and in the middle of the 19th century it lost half its population to famine. In the mid-1930s an American diplomat described it as "the personification of dirt and filth" and except for the Shrine "one of the least attractive of Persian towns." ⁶⁰ []

The population of Qom today is nearly 175,000, an increase of about 25 percent in the last decade. A large part of the population is connected in one way or another with the religious establishment. In the Pahlavi years efforts were made to dilute the religious preponderance by encouraging the establishment of

⁶⁰ Henry Filmer (pseud.), J. Reeves Child, *The Pageant of Persia* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1936), p. 33. (U)

secular schools, factories, and theaters. Nevertheless, the influence of the religious establishment was recognized by the election of Abol Fazel Towliat, custodian of the Shrine, to parliament from 1937 to 1955. His predecessor from 1928 to 1937 was also a shrine official. After Towliat, with the government having greater control of the elections, deputies with little or no religious affiliation were elected. []

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Although Qom had religious schools for several centuries, they had fallen to a second rate status, with Karbala and An Najaf being far superior. The turning point came in 1921 when Ayatollah Abdol Karim Haeri-Yazdi, a well-known teacher in Arak, made the pilgrimage to Qom.⁶¹ A prominent merchant tried to persuade him to move to Qom, but it was not until a *hadith* was quoted to him, "at the end of time, knowledge will appear in Qom and spread to the rest of the world," that he agreed. []

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Several of Haeri-Yazdi's followers from Arak followed him to Qom, among them 21-year-old Ruhollah Khomeini. In the intervening years Qom has steadily increased its stature as a center of religious learning; it has at the same time become the center of clerical opposition to the government. []

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Fifteen separate schools compose the Howze-ye-Elmiyyah-ye Qom (the Qom Circle of Learning). They are all private schools generally named after their founders. Two schools, the Fayziyyeh and the Dar al-Shifa, were the only ones in existence when Haeri arrived in Qom in 1921; others had gone out of existence. Thirteen were built or renovated during the Pahlavi period, as many as half of these since 1945—a commentary both on the vitality of religion and the ineffectiveness of the government's anticlerical campaign. []

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The best known school is the Fayziyyeh, where the majority of the anti-Pahlavi manifestations took place. The Fayziyyeh dates from the Safavid period and is adjacent to the Shrine of Fatameh. The main building measures 250 by 170 feet, but has had many additions in the last three decades. It has 100 rooms used for students. []

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⁶¹ Haeri-Yazdi is the father of Mehdi Haeri-Yazdi, recently Ayatollah Khomeini's special representative in the Iranian Embassy in Washington. (U)

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Figure 9.
A neighborhood mosque in Tehran

Unclassified ©

25X1 Tabriz has some 225 mosques, eight mausoleums, three *imamzadehs*, and four *madraseshs*. About 1,000 Tabrizis are said to be in the theological center in Qom.⁶³ []

25X1 Shiraz possesses 57 mosques, 27 pilgrimage sites, three mausoleums, and 10 *madraseshs*. The number of the *ulema* in Shiraz is not recorded, but one "Who's Who" of the Shiraz *ulema* runs to four volumes.⁶⁴ []

Tehran has a large number of mosques, some dating back a couple of centuries. Others were built recently, but there seems to be no overall figure available. There are scores of Hosseiniyehs, which specialize in commemorating the martyrdom of Hosein. There are also 12 places of pilgrimage in Tehran and 19 in the surrounding countryside. One of the most famous of these is the Imamzadeh Daud located in the mountains northwest of Tehran. It is reached by a difficult and precipitous trail, but both the trail and the village surrounding the *Imamzadeh* are crowded with pilgrims during the summer months. One clerical writer

⁶³ *Ganjineh*, Vol. 3, p. 287. (U)

⁶⁴ *Ganjineh*, Vol. 4, p. 417. (U)

comments that thousands have traversed this difficult path without injury, but "if someone were to fall and land in the deep chasm, he would climb out unharmed because of the power of the saint."⁶⁵ []

The above numbers highlight the sort of structure the clergy has available. Mosques and Hosseiniyehs and the lesser religious study organizations connected with them function as social and political organizations, a shadow power structure paralleling the official power structure, which for the first time in three quarters of a century has recently demonstrated its ability to mobilize the masses. []

Education

The Iranian clergy grows up in a very special world, and for those who achieve high rank, the world is even more special. Most of the present day religious leadership was born in the first decade of the 20th century. A secular educational system was practically nonexistent at that time. Whatever education was available—none for most of the population—was provided by the clergy, and the emphasis was primarily

⁶⁵ *Ganjineh*, Vol. 4, p. 344 f. (U)

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religious.⁶⁶ For most of those who received some education it was at an elementary level—a knowledge of writing, arithmetic, the Koran in Arabic (often memorized more than understood), some knowledge of Persian poetry, and little else. For those who wanted to go beyond the *maktab*, the five or six years of elementary schooling, the *madraseh*, a higher religious school, provided the avenue. This system turned out not only clergymen, but also much of the civil service, politicians, statesmen, and litterateurs as well as agnostics, atheists, dervishes, Sufis, and secularists. []

The clergy has been held in popular esteem in spite of stories of clerical corruption, deceit, and general ungodliness which are as prevalent in Iran as in other societies.⁶⁷ Religion has always provided upward mobility for those with the ability and stamina to undergo the rigorous training leading to a high position. For some clergy, the religious vocation is a family tradition spanning many generations, and a respectable genealogy can be important. []

Those following the path of religion start at an early age. The example of one 17th century theologian is typical of the regimen endured by most aspiring clerics until very recently. By the age of five and a half he had read the Koran and learned many poems. In the next five years he studied Arabic grammar continuously, memorized basic texts and commentaries of religious authorities, made his way to Iraq to study at a famous *madraseh*, and journeyed to Shiraz for the same purpose. He studied in Shiraz until he was 20 years old. Returning home he married—only to return to Shiraz after three weeks, leaving his wife behind. He then went to Esfahan to study further. There he found a patron in the most powerful theologian of the time, who had him appointed a lecturer at the *madraseh*. After nine years, because of increasing difficulty with

⁶⁶ Education was mostly an urban institution and limited to middle-class merchant or civil service, and upper class families. Often schools were supported by a wealthy family primarily to educate family members. Village *maktabs*, such as the one in which Khomeini received his early education, were uncommon and even where they existed they were attended by only a few students. (U)

⁶⁷ Razi in his *Ganjineh* writes “. . . it is a matter of regret that in general the study of ethics has been abandoned and, with few exceptions, largely ignored, and for this reason, many of those who wear the clothes of a spiritual leader are lacking desirable qualities, but act in such a fashion that people view them negatively and have no faith or confidence in them.” (U)

his eyes, he started traveling again. He visited all the holy cities of Iraq, revisited Esfahan, and finally returned at age 38 to his first *madraseh* in Iraq. For most of his life he lived in poverty, eating little, sometimes near starvation, his eyes ruined by studying in the near dark or by candlelight, running errands, and doing menial work for his various teachers. He never attained high rank or wealth. He died when he was 78 years old, and there is no record of whether he thought it all worthwhile. []

Today's clerical leaders may not have lived in such penury, but worldly goods do not rank high among their needs. Three hundred years ago Shiism was just getting established in Iran, and the funding now available for the *talabeh* (student of religion) was nonexistent. For most, the life is frugal even now, and a reputation for abstemiousness is a part of a clergyman's charisma. There are a few, however, whose interests are more material than spiritual. What influence they have—and it may be considerable—derives more from the economic or political power they have garnered than from their spiritual leadership. []

An examination of the biographies of 105 *ulema* living in 1975 provides some interesting insights into the clergy as a whole.⁶⁸ The clergymen were drawn from six cities: Tehran (21), Tabriz (16), Qom (21), Esfahan (11), Shiraz (18), Mashhad (21). []

In this sample birthdates were available for 93. The oldest was born sometime before 1875, the youngest in 1934. One-third were born between 1904 and 1915, including 10 percent born in 1911 alone. About one-third were born before 1904. The average age of the 93 *ulema* is at least 63.5; in Esfahan the average age is 78. []

All bear the title *Hojjat-al-Islam* (Proof of Islam), except 18 described as *ayatollahs* and one *mujtahed*. Forty-six percent are *seyeds*, or descendants of the Prophet, and two of the sample claim descent from the imams. All but one or two are hajjis. Three-quarters of

⁶⁸ These data are taken from Razi's *Ganjineh-ye-Daneshmandan*. The criteria he used to choose his subjects are not known, except that they have some claim to being scholars. Thus, the run-of-the-mill mullah is not included. The only criteria used for the choices in this paper are that they were living in the six major cities in 1975 when the source book was published. (U)

Figure 10

Birthplace and Residence of a Sample of Clergymen

	Living there	Born there	Educated there
Tehran	21	4	8
Tabriz	16	10	14
Qom	21	2	18
Esfahan	11	10	10
Shiraz	18	14	18
Mashhad	21	8	15

The above information is Unclassified.

the *ulema* had fathers who were clergymen, and of these nearly half had grandfathers, great-grand-fathers, or great-great-grandfathers who were also clergymen.

As might be expected, teaching, writing, and conducting religious services of various kinds are the primary activities of the *ulema*. One Tabrizi *mujtahed* was described as "preaching and protesting innovation from his own mosque," and another Tabrizi apparently spends some of his time "fighting with unjust people." He has probably been overworked in the last year. Five of the 105 *ulema* were in exile from Iraq.

About 50 percent of the sample have studied in Qom. The Esfahanis, however, tend to stay at home; if they leave home to study, it is to An Najaf in Iraq. The Shirazis also go to An Najaf more often than anywhere else if they continue their education.

The Tabriz clergymen generally continue their education in Qom, and if they go further it is to An Najaf. Two of the Tabrizis were educated in An Najaf and then went to Tabriz. The father, a Tabrizi, probably was studying in An Najaf when his son was born.

The manner in which the clergy is trained is in some respects very free. The *talabeh* can choose what he wants to study, where he wants to study, and with whom. There are no formal examinations, no required courses in the Western sense, and no diplomas. Counterbalancing this is the limited range of subject matter that is available and the attitude that whatever is not included in the "religious sciences" is of no

importance. This attitude has been clearly stated by one writer:

The true and religiously enlightened thinkers are totally in agreement on the fact that the new branches of learning like physics and chemistry, most of which are material and natural sciences, are nothing more than an illusion and an empty husk and give ignorant people pieces of knowledge far from the truth. Indeed, most of it is misleading and harmful.⁶⁹ (U)

Some of today's students have apparently studied at secular institutions before turning toward religion, but the traditionalist is not enthusiastic:

A group of students at Qom have degrees in the new sciences like chemistry and physics, and some of them are familiar with foreign languages. But, as we have said, the last sciences are superfluous knowledge and not *'ilm*, because ignorance of them is not a loss.

But all natural sciences are not excluded:

Astronomy consists of knowing the positions of the heavens and the fixed and moving stars, their signs and their influences. Mathematics consists of knowledge of numbers and their capability of being added, subtracted, etc. The religion of Islam, for a number of reasons, has forbidden the study of astronomy and has called astronomers liars, but it has permitted a portion of it for the purpose of determining the *qibla* (the direction of worship) and the time.⁷⁰ (U)

Resistance to modern learning is not unique to this particular writer. Twenty years ago an Iraqi Shiite who had his early education in a traditional school undertook a study of the theological school at An Najaf, the most important educational institution for the Shiites. He concluded:

I had many discussions with scholars and the great *mujtaheds* about the need for introducing new subject matter like modern philosophy, psychology, sociology, some hygiene, and elements of natural science. The response was generally negative. I remember talking to a professor of Islamic philosophy about the philosophy of Henri Bergson. I found him unacquainted with the name.⁷¹ (U)

⁶⁹ Razi, *Ganjineh-ye-Daneshmandan*, p. 154f. (U)

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Fadil Jamali, "The Theological Colleges of Najaf," *Muslim World*, 50(1960), p. 15-22. (U)

There is some movement toward introducing modern subjects into the curriculum, but there is little information on what progress is being made. An Najaf may be more advanced than Qom in this respect. The development of a British-sponsored secular education system in Iraq seems to have galvanized some of the Shia leaders there to undertake a modernization. This movement is associated with Shaykh Mohammed Reza al-Muzafar, one of the leading Shiite scholars of An Najaf in this century. He apparently was troubled particularly by the inadequate preparation of the students in speaking and writing, attributing this to the material they were immersed in.

Shaykh al-Muzafar realized that the benefit of such textbooks that the Najafi student encountered at this stage was outweighed by the mark of obscurity, so that the student was forced to spend much time understanding the language. []

Reform was not easy in An Najaf. Al-Asafi notes circumspcctly:

caution and conservatism marked the actions of those in charge of the affairs of guidance and thought. . . . General opinion prevailed over the course of events . . . in Najaf which made the undertaking of any reforming activity extremely dangerous. ⁷² (U)

Between 1934 and 1956 Shaykh al-Muzafar established a sort of preparatory school aimed at training students for higher religious education. Between 1936 and 1944 this school, called Muntadi al-Nashr, was expanded from one level to four. The reforming aspect of this school apparently consisted of an effort to simplify the language used, to produce new textbooks, and to establish a course of study in which the student moved from one level to the next in an orderly manner. In 1956 Shaykh al-Muzafar established a graduate level religious school that prepared the students for the grade of *mujtahed*. Innovations at this level were the study of sociology, psychology, education, and foreign languages. []

⁷² Mohammad Mahdi al-Asafi, *The School of Najaf* (in Arabic) (Najaf, 1384(1964)). (U)

An indication of how far this section of the Najafi *ulema* had progressed is the fact that the Sheikh applied to the government for permission to open his schools. The Muntadi al-Nashr is only one among the 24 religious schools in An Najaf, and there is no information to indicate what influence it has had on the traditional schools or even how it rates among the clergy as a whole. []

Qom is conservative, but seems to have one school teaching "modern" subjects. The Muntazariyyeh school offers—in addition to the full range of traditional subjects—English, physics, chemistry, and biology. The modern subjects are poorly taught, according to one authority. It is fair to say that on the whole Shiite theological education is conservative and traditional with only limited interest in modern areas of education. []

This disinterest in modern learning arises from the fact that Shiite Islam as it has always been interpreted in Iran is a total and closed system. Since it is divinely inspired, it is complete and infallible, and the answer to all questions are contained in it when Islam is rightly understood and interpreted. This is what clerics such as Ayatollah Khomeini have in mind when they insist that Islam is progressive and compatible with the modern world. []

A characteristic of the system of education, at least on the more advanced level, is the constant argumentation and debate that takes place among scholars and between students and teachers. An orthodox view is expressed by Ayatollah Razi:

The sciences of argumentation and debate are branches [of theology], the knowledge of which is very important and necessary, especially in the defense of God's unity and the worship of God that are the root and foundation of this branch of learning in the face of Communism and imperialism which are threatening the world and also in the defense of guardianship and Imamate from the Sunni Wahhabis.

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The functioning of this process is described as follows:

The skilled student presents his own point of view, his objections, and problems to the teacher and requests an answer. The teacher, who must show himself ready and prepared to answer any kind of a question and problem . . . must give an answer. If a problem is not raised or concern is not shown or if (the student) talks too long or is too persistent, then with scholarly harshness or in a friendly tone (the teacher) asks the student to wait and cease objecting. Sometimes it might happen that a teacher may concede a point to a student and justly say that a student is right. It is actually very interesting when a prepared and skilled student stands against a distinguished professor.

But all was not scholarly objectivity. The story is told of one great scholar who was held in such awe that only five of his students dared to question him, and he ignored all but two. ☐

The development of verbal agility and extemporaneous comment is a major asset for the *mujtahed* who must be prepared at any time and place to give authoritative opinions on a wide range of subjects calling on the sum total of his accumulated knowledge. There is no provision for taking a question under advisement or consulting a colleague for a second opinion. ☐

Some of the discussions apparently approach the dimensions of the theological debates of the European middle ages. An early European observer commented that metaphysical debate was "little more than a series of argumentative disputations upon wild and unprofitable paradoxes," and courses in logic were mostly "an ingenious method of playing upon words, the object being not so much to arrive at truth as to display quickness of mind and readiness of repartee in the formation of possible hypotheses."⁷³ ☐

The Curriculum

Islamic education has a long and brilliant tradition. Its weakness has been its difficulty in absorbing modern learning into the system and rationalizing it with traditional precepts. Some Sunni schools such as Cairo's Al-Azhar have achieved this. The Shia schools as a whole seem to have successfully resisted modernization. ☐

⁷³ Dwight Donaldson, "The Shrine Colleges of Meshed," *Muslim World*, Vol. 16 (1926), p. 77. (U)

Figure 11

The Fields of Knowledge

Transmitted or Traditional Sciences

Morphology

Syntax/grammar

Literary Sciences

Rhetoric

Art of Metaphors

Principles of Jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*)

Jurisprudence (*fiqh*)

Science of *Hadith*

Koranic Commentary (*taj sir*)

Intellectual or Rational Sciences

Logic

Philosophical and Theological Sciences (*falsafah and kalam*)

Sufism and gnosis (*tasawwuf ana irfan*)

Medicine*

Mathematical Science

Geometry

Arithmetic

Astronomy

* No longer taught, but could be revived.

The above information is Unclassified.

In the earliest centuries of Islam the mosque served as a school teaching the Koran, *hadith* (traditions), and Arabic, and this practice persists. In the 9th and 10th centuries an enormous amount of Greek philosophical and scientific work was translated into Arabic and ultimately absorbed in the Islamic educational system. Islamic philosophy in the Sunni world ended in the 12th century, but it has continued as a living tradition among the Shias, especially in Iran. Although most theological students do not go deeply into philosophy after completing the study of the religious sciences, those who do study logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics from the books of the most outstanding of the medieval philosophers. The student who chooses traditional mathematics will learn his geometry and optics from Euclid and his astronomy from Ptolemy.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Seyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 73. (U)

Knowledge in the Islamic scheme is categorized as the transmitted or traditional sciences and the intellectual or rational sciences. Transmitted sciences are those that depend on texts handed down from the original authors. Intellectual sciences are those that, in the Islamic view, depend on the exercise of man's understanding and intuition. Not all subjects are taught in each school, and some, such as medicine, have disappeared completely. For each there is a series of traditional textbooks with commentaries and sometimes commentaries on the commentary. []

Arabic, the language of the Koran, is essential and is the first course studied. According to Shia tradition, the Imam Ali "invented" Arabic grammar. One of his companions heard someone misquote a verse from the Koran, whereupon the companion rushed to Ali "in great consternation." Ali explained two rules to him—first, that a word is a noun, verb, or particle; and second, that the subject is nominative, the object is accusative, and a construct is genitive. From this grew Arabic grammar. []

The Arabs and Persians use different books. A Persian student might begin with a volume called *The Compendium of the Introductions* consisting of five books: *Conjugations* (composed in the 14th century); *Words Governing Others* (14th century); *Guidance and The Everlasting* (both 16th century); and *The Sample* (12th century). This is then followed by a 15th century commentary on an 8th century grammar (*Familiarity* of Ibn Malik). The commentary, which is generally memorized, is in the form of a poem of 1,000 verses. From this, one goes on to more advanced books such as *The Crown of the Bride*, a commentary on a dictionary, and *The Freeing of the Understanding*, the most advanced grammar. []

Rhetoric is "speaking according to the exigencies of time and place" and is studied from a 13th century text (*Key to the Sciences*) and its 14th century commentary. []

Principles of Jurisprudence is studied from 11th and 12th century texts, but there are also a number of popular 17th, 18th, and 19th century texts. For several centuries the *Usulis* were suppressed by the *Akhbaris*—a dispute among Shias that has repercussions

to the present—and *Usulis* have prevailed only in the last 200 years.⁷⁵ The *Principles* is the methodology of Muslim jurisprudence, the science of proofs that lead to the establishment of legal standards in general, the philosophy and theory of law. []

Fiqh or jurisprudence consists of understanding and extracting the law by applying the principles. This is the major field in a student's career. The science of jurisprudence was created by the fifth and sixth imams, according to the Shia, who say that most legal traditions and *hadith* come from them. []

Thousands of books have been written on *fiqh*. A standard text is *The Firm Tie* dating from the last century, with two commentaries—*Taking Hold of the Firm Tie* by Ayatollah Hakim, who died recently, and *The Utmost Extremity for the One Who Wishes to Grasp Firmly* by Ayatollah Marashi Najafi. Other popular texts are *The Enlightenment of the Allameh* and *The Watering Hole of the Enquirer*. []

Hadith consists of not only the study of traditions but also the "science of men"—specifically a study and assessment of those who transmitted the *hadith*, since its validity depends on who related it and how. The *isnad* or chain of transmission is sometimes included in a *hadith*, in abbreviated form. Thus Khomeini, in quoting the *hadith* to support the argument that the jurists are representative of the Prophet, is careful to cite the *isnad*, "Ali, citing Abih, who quoted al-Nawfali, who quoted al-Sukuni, who quoted Abi Abdollah, said. . . ." ⁷⁶ []

Koranic Commentary (*tafsir*) "consists of knowing the revelation of the verses of the Koran, the inner and outer meaning of the verses of the Koran, the inner and outer meaning of the words, knowledge of verses not subject to dispute, the abrogated verses, etc." This science was created by Ali, according to Shiite tradition. There are a large number of commentaries. Some of the popular ones date from the 10th to 14th

⁷⁵ The Akhbari school dates from the 12th century. It holds that the sources of Islamic law are only the Koran and the Sunna of the Prophet. Akhbaris reject *ijtihad* and the concept of the *Marja-e-taqlid* and the authority of the *mujtaheds*. The *Usulis* believe the opposite. Cities were often split between *Akhbaris* and *Usulis*, and violence between the rival schools was frequent. In one sense Ali Shariati can be considered an *Akhbari*, although the term has not been applied to him by his Persian opponents. (U)

⁷⁶ Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, p. 30. (U)

centuries, although there are later ones in use, including one by Ayatollah Taleqani. []

As for the remainder of the courses, the titles are self-explanatory. Theology (*kalam*), "has fallen out of usage, although . . . many students show an interest in it and on holidays spend time with professors studying theology." In spite of this lack of attention "knowledge in this field is incumbent on every eloquent, learned man." ⁷⁷ Marashi-Najafi, Khomeini, Khoi, and Tabatabai are all known as theologians. []

The fields of specialization of 67 of the 108 *ulema* mentioned earlier provide a glimpse of the relative importance the clergymen attach to the various fields of study. Forty-two specialized in *fiqh* and *usul*, seven in *kalam* and *hikmet*, six in mathematics and astronomy, four in ethics, three each in philosophy and literature, and two in logic. []

The Role of the *Mujtahed*

There are a variety of titles that are applied to clergymen. These titles do not represent a formal hierarchical structure but are honorifics or description of the clergyman's function. Mullah or *Akhund* are general terms that can refer to any religious functionary, but popularly indicate the journeyman clergyman, usually of limited education, who ministers to his followers on a day-to-day basis in a village or a "parish." Hojjat al-Islam and ayatollah are honorifics that may be applied to a clergyman by his followers as a mark of respect. Ayatollah bears a more prestigious connotation than Hojjat al-Islam. Ayatollah al-Ozma, or Great Ayatollah, is applied to a handful of the most important religious leaders. Khomeini, Shariatmadari, Marashi-Najafi, and one or two others would fall into this category. *Mujtahed* and *faqih* are virtually interchangeable as descriptions of a jurisprudent. *Mujtahed* emphasizes the method the jurisprudent uses, that is, *ijtihad*, which is discussed below, while *faqih* emphasizes the subject matter, *fiqh* or law. []

A *mujtahed* is, more than anything else, a lawyer or a jurisprudent. The source of his law is the Koran, the sayings and deeds of Muhammad, and the acts of the imams. Although he uses religious materials derived

⁷⁷ Razi, *Ganjineh-ye-Daneshmandan* (U)

ultimately from God, he is not primarily a theologian.⁷⁸ A recognized theologian may not be a *mujtahed*. The amount of material that must be mastered to qualify to become a *mujtahed* is so great that few can also master the equally large amount of material necessary to become an outstanding theologian. Every Shiite must follow a living *mujtahed*, a requirement that, if completely implemented, would place clergymen as behind-the-scenes advisers to every government official, no matter what legal or constitutional arrangements prevailed. []

Shia authorities generally accept six conditions as necessary for a *mujtahed*—maturity, intelligence, faith, justice, being male, and of legitimate birth. Justice implies one "who performs that which is obligatory and abandons that which is forbidden." In learning he must know theology, principles of the faith, grammar, Arabic, logic, and principles of jurisprudence.⁷⁹ []

The *mujtahed* by his learning and piety is capable of properly interpreting divine law. The *mujtaheds* are therefore the servants of the imam. It is from this that they derive their authority, that they speak for God's law not man's. Nevertheless, it is possible for them to err, since they do not receive any supernatural guidance.⁸⁰ []

There is a tradition from the sixth imam Ja'far al-Sadiq that all those who acted as judges over the Muslims and interpreted the law had their appointment from him.⁸¹ The *mujtahed's* role in interpreting the imam's role seems to be a late development that is not supported by early Twelver Shia doctrine. It developed in the 17th century and became widespread in the 18th century. This was the same time that a

⁷⁸ Theology is *kalam*, "word." The Islamic concept of theology derives from the long debate over whether or not the "word" of God is to be considered eternal. God is eternal, but "word" or speech is transitory. How can an eternal god produce transitory words. Such a debate is of limited interest to modern Western society but is still pertinent to Muslim theologians. (U)

⁷⁹ Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran*, p. 10. (U)

⁸⁰ Asaf A. A. Fyzee, *Outlines of Muhammadan Law* (Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 46, and Hassan b. Yusuf b. Ali Ibnu'l-Mutahhar al-Hilli, *Al-Ba'at-Hadi 'Ashar* (A Treatise on the Principles of Shiite Theology). Trans. William M. Miller (London: Luzac and Co., 1958), p. 99. (U)

⁸¹ Quoted in Leonard Binder, *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), p. 122. (U)

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25X1 closely related doctrine developed, that of the clergy's role in government.⁸² It is this late doctrine that prevails today. []

Khomeini describes the jurist in this manner:

Considering that the jurisprudent is not a prophet, then he is a prophet's trustee. In the Age of the Absence the jurisprudent and nobody else is the imam and leader of the Moslems and the person dispensing justice among them justly.⁸³ (u)

CPYRGHT
25X1 *Ijtihad* has been defined by Shia jurists as "the capacity or ability to find what the law could possibly be through juristic speculation" or "the capacity of finding authoritative juristic reasoning and legal sources of the rules of law."⁸⁴ Unlike other sources of the Shariah, however, *ijtihad* is a process, the logical reasoning that uses the Koran, *sunna*, *aql*, and *ijma* to provide the propositions leading to a reasoned conclusion. []

25X1 This contrasts with the Sunni practice that requires textual support for legal decisions. For the Sunni the "Door of *Ijtihad*," that is, the right to make fresh decisions, was closed after the great lawmakers finished their work in the 10th century. []

25X1 Shiite scholars argue that the concept of *ijtihad* provides the means for reinterpreting Shiite law in the light of modern requirements. In 1962 Mehdi Bazargan wrote that "We . . . have kept open the door of *ijtihad* with our need for imitation of the most knowledgeable *mujtahed* so that our religion could remain living and fresh and progress with the changes and the broadening of time." He points, however, points to a problem:

CPYRGHT If it were established that the thoughts, information, and technical horizons of our *mujtaheds* centered on matters of past centuries, what would there be in the changing of names and transferring of positions from a deceased Ayatollah to a living one? Then *ijtihad* would be closed and dead.⁸⁵

⁸² Joseph Eliash, "The Ithna 'Ashari Juristic Theory of Political and Legal Authority," *Studia Islamica*, XXIX (1969), p. 26. (u)

⁸³ Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, p. 36. (u)

⁸⁴ A. Ezzati, *Shi'i Islamic Law and Jurisprudence* (Lahore, 1976), pp. 88-89. (u)

⁸⁵ "The People's Expectation of the Marja" (in Persian), in *Bahsi dar bareh-ye Marji'yat-va ruhanniyat* (A Discussion about the office of the Marja and clericalism) (Tehran, 1962). (u)

Bazargan's subsequent arguments for improved education for the clergy suggest that he believes that the horizons of the clergy center on past centuries. [] 25X1

It is such considerations that have led to a tentative and still incomplete reconsideration of the role of the *mujtahed* and of the *marja-e-taqlid*. This latter office is the *mujtahed* par excellence. He is one who has been recognized by the majority of the Shiites as their supreme leader. He is sometimes called the pishva-ye Muslemin, the leader of the Muslims. This position developed in the middle of the 19th century, although attempts have been made to identify it earlier. [] 25X1

The role of the *marja-e-taqlids* and the *mujtaheds* has been discussed critically by a few. In 1962 a conference was held in Tehran by a group of laymen and clergy to discuss the problems involved in the emergence of a supreme Shiite leader following the death of Ayatollah Borujerdi in 1960.⁸⁶ Discussing "The Peoples Expectation of the Marja," Mehdi Bazargan, then a university professor and a well-known opponent of the Shah, remarks that:

CPYRGHT Our great *marja-e-taqlids* and *mujtaheds*, even supposing that . . . they have the best preparations and qualities . . . cannot be oceans of wisdom and possessed of all necessary skills in today's confused and fragmented world. Specialization and centralization are the necessities of the new human life and the perfection of mankind. (u)

Ayatollah Mahmud Taleqani, although differing with Bazargan on several points, sees a weakness in centering too much responsibility in one man: CPYRGHT

. . . a heavy responsibility with respect to God and mankind is placed on the shoulders of a *marja* exactly at the time when he is becoming elderly and his powers are declining . . . people will gather around who are very unsuitable, and he will remain the more secluded from the people. . . .

⁸⁶ This conference is discussed, but without any translations by Ann K.S. Lambton in "A Reconsideration of the Position of the Marja' al-Taqlid and the Religious Institution," *Studia Islamica*, Vol. xx(1964), p. 115-135. The proceedings of the conference are found in *Bahsi dar bareh-ye Marji'yat-va ruhanniyat* (A discussion about the office of the Marja' and Clericalism). (u)

CPYRGHT Then, in an almost prophetic comment, Taleqani added:

Thus the religious link of the people with him will be broken except through an intermediary, and occasionally (as has happened) he will appear to be a religious tyrant. In this manner, the spiritual leader . . . will lose his luster. (U)

The opinions given by the *mujtahed* are supposed to reflect the application of all of his accumulated knowledge, wisdom, and acumen to the problem at hand. By definition the *mujtahed* is assumed to possess all these qualities, and some undoubtedly do. One danger is inherent in this system. An ill or aging *mujtahed* may continue to function long after his abilities have failed with no one to contest his right to continue. Bazargan describes an instance that he clearly found troubling. Visiting the home of the late Ayatollah Borujerdi, at that time the recognized leader of the Shia, Bazargan saw problems put to the aging Borujerdi by a medical student. The first one was essentially a theological one about the imamate and the appearance of the imam of the age. Borujerdi's uninformative answer was that "it is good for every person to question in proportion to his own understanding and position." The other question, a practical one for a Muslim medical student, concerned the responsibility involved in the dissection of corpses—whether it was forbidden or permissible and what ritual washing was involved after touching a dead body. Borujerdi's answer was to "consult the practical treatises." In Bazargan's words, "The smoke rose from my head."

25X1 []

Most Shia scholars hold that the *marja-e-taqlid* "emerges"—comes to be recognized by the majority of the Shia as the supreme leader. Participants in the 1962 colloquium seemed to hold that the *marja* should be elected by a group of knowledgeable men competent to judge the qualifications of a potential *marja*. There is respectable evidence to support the opinion of the colloquium.⁸⁷ At present, however, the question seems academic. The prevailing view is otherwise. Khomeini is clearly considered by his followers to be the *marja-e-taqlid*; he has "emerged," and the concept of selection by a committee is not likely to be warmly received. On

⁸⁷ This is set out in Joseph Eliash, "Misconceptions Regarding the Juridical Status of the Iranian Ulama," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 10 (1979), pp. 9-25. (U)

the other hand, the quite different attitude toward the *marja* that Bazargan, Taleqani, and Beheshti expressed 15 years ago may have been a factor in the struggle for political power between Khomeini and Bazargan's government. []

25X1

There is some evidence to show that at times the "emergence" of the *marja* has had significant help. A Western scholar relates a procedure that had been described to him:

There is no formal method of choosing Ayatollah al-Uzma, but it would seem that a relatively small group of some 30 or 40 persons, most of whom reside at Qom, perform the function of the College of Cardinals by acknowledging the leadership of someone. To the insiders, these are known as *ra'is tarash* (sculptors of the head) or *marji dorostkun* (creators of the following). This group is partially comprised of *Ayatullazadegan*, or the descendants of once famous and learned *mujtahids*, and partially of the leading teachers at Qom. Certain merchants are important, as is the influential Ayatullah Behbehani in Tehran, and a small group of *muballighin* or propagandists who are not *mujtahids* but preachers.⁸⁸ (U)

CPYRGHT

Whether this was an ad hoc group to try to choose a successor to Borujerdi or whether it was the way that Borujerdi had been chosen is not clear. It is undoubtedly true that much clerical politicking goes on in maneuvering for this post, but the permanent existence of such a group is unproven. []

25X1

Shiite Law

The *Shariah*

Two systems of law have long coexisted in Iran, the religious law (*Shariah*) and customary or secular law (*urf*). The sixth Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is considered to be the founder of Shiite jurisprudence. At the earliest period *Shariah* courts were supposed to have jurisdiction in matters of personal status, and *Urf* courts had jurisdiction in cases involving the state. European-style civil courts were created in Tehran as early as 1907. Because of the lack of administrative codes of any kind, these civil courts were unable to function. In practice *Shariah* courts came to dominate the legal

⁸⁸ L. Binder, "The Proofs of Islam: Religion and Politics in Iran," in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of H.A.R. Gibb*, ed. George Makdisi (Leiden, 1965), p. 132. (U)

system because successive governments were too weak and disorganized to prevail against the *Shariah's* claim of total authority. *Shariah* law, however, came to be seen by the modernizers as inadequate. An eminent lawyer, Ali Shayegan, who later became a leading member of the National Front and supporter of Mossadeq wrote in 1945:

It (*Shariah* law) had become too involved and ambiguous. Consequently, few *mujtaheds* were competent to administer it properly. . . . The world conditions had changed so much that the *fiqh* was not adequate to cope with new needs.⁸⁹ (U)

For a century the civil government has attempted to curb clerical power and substitute a civil judicial system with codified laws and at least the semblance of due process. This was not only because such a system was deemed to be more compatible with modernization, but also because a civil government ultimately could not permit such power in the hands of a nongovernmental body. The Pahlavis, father and son, completed the secularization of the legal system which the Qajars had commenced, but some in the clergy never forgot the power they had once wielded or forgave those who had imposed a "foreign system" on Iran. []

From 1906 until 1932 a struggle went on between the *Shariah* courts and the nascent civil court system. Many of the legal reforms of this period were called "experimental" in order to avoid direct conflict with the clergy. Religious courts were not completely abolished, but were greatly restricted in their authority. Article 2 of the Judicial Law of 1931 limited religious courts "to judge such cases as are defined within their jurisdiction by the laws of the realm. No cases may be referred to a *Shariah* court without authorization from state courts and the office of the Attorney-General." By 1932 Reza Shah was powerful enough to ignore the clergy and had a law passed requiring registration of legal documents of ownership and of other transactions concerning property in secular state courts only. This previously had been the monopoly of *Shariah* courts and had been one of their most important and most lucrative functions. As a result, many clergymen were forced to seek secular employment. []

⁸⁹ Ali Shayegan, *Hoquq-e-Madani-yi Iran* (Civil Code of Iran) (Tehran, 1945), p. 29-30. (U)

The coup de grace was given in 1936 when a law was passed excluding most members of the clergy from the judicial system. Judges were required to hold a degree from the Tehran faculty of law or a foreign university attesting to at least three years of legal study. Former judges not possessing such a degree were required to pass special examinations in Iranian or foreign law in order to stay in the Ministry of Justice and could go no higher than halfway up the promotion scale. This immediately followed other measures such as subjecting theological students to military service unless they passed a special government-administered exam, and the decrees removing the veil from women and putting Western headgear on men. []

At the time of these events most of today's senior Ayatollahs, Khomeini, Shariatmadari and Taleqani among them, were at the beginning of their careers. Reza Shah's programs deprived them of the sort of future their predecessors had enjoyed—power, influence, a key role in government and society, and for some, wealth. (Clergymen as individuals or as executors had been among the largest landlords in the country.) It is no surprise that personal bitterness serves to strengthen and perhaps for some even to motivate the theological and philosophical opposition to the Pahlavi monarchy. []

Shiite law, as administered by Khomeini and his followers in Iran today, is harsh and uncompromising. Certainly a significant amount of the punishment being meted out to officials of the former regime is probably pure revenge for which a religious coloration is sought.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, the severity of the judgments

⁹⁰ The execution of retired General Hassan Pakravan is a good example. He was chief of SAVAK at the time of the 1963 riots when Khomeini first came to prominence and was first arrested. The violence of these riots was due, at least in part, to the fact that Pakravan was reluctant to take harsh measures against the demonstrators. Nevertheless, Khomeini was arrested while Pakravan was in office. It did not help Pakravan that he did not hide his distaste for the clergy.

The execution of 71-year-old Senator Alameh-Vahidi provides another example. He was from one of Iran's oldest religious families that had provided many *mujtaheds*. Alameh-Vahidi himself was educated in Karbala and Qom and was known as a writer on philosophy and religion. He served the Shah as a senator in the last two parliaments. He was also a *mujtahed*, and in 1961 he issued a *fatwa* stating that land reform was not contrary to religion, but on the contrary Islam, in the name of justice, demanded land reform. As a *mujtahed* he had the right to do this. In today's climate, however, a *mujtahed's* opinion is what Khomeini says it is. (U)

has precedent in situations where the clergy had significant power. []

Khomeini is in a direct line from such eminent jurists in the past as the one who put to death 70 persons for various sins and heresies. Unable to find an executioner on the first occasion, the *mujtahed* unsuccessfully tried to decapitate the malefactor himself. The job was finished by a bystander while the cleric fainted with emotion. Somewhat later a *mujtahed* acquired the title of "Sufi-slayer" from the number of dervishes and sufis whom he condemned to death. []

But Shiite justice need not be what Khomeini has made it. In those times when an uncompromising fundamentalist has not been preeminent, clerical justice has been enlightened. One writer noted that:

Those who have been brought into contact with these distinguished doctors have expressed a high opinion of their integrity and the merciful inclination of their sentences.⁹¹ (U)

Whether Khomeini's fundamentalism prevails or not, the tenets of Shia Islam will be important in Iranian politics for the foreseeable future. These tenets may be applied harshly or leniently. This will depend to a large extent on the character of the *mujtaheds* and the amount of power that civil government can exert over legal proceedings. The application of Shiite legal principles in the modern world is a new undertaking. It has been nearly a half century since the clergy lost most of its legal prerogatives and much longer since it had undisputed power. []

The entire body of Islamic law is called the *Shariah*. It is Divine Law that must be followed by all Muslims, it is "the concrete embodiment of Divine Will according to which man should live in both his private and social life."⁹² It covers religion, dogma, and law in the usual sense and encompasses economic, social, and political behavior. []

⁹¹ George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question* (London, 1892), Vol. I, p. 453. (U)

⁹² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 93. (U)

The *Shariah* for the Shiites has five sources:

- The Koran.
- The *sunna*, or the practice of the Prophet.
- *Ijtihad*, or the interpretations of the *mujtaheds*.
- *Aql* (reason).
- *Ijma* (consensus). []

The Koran

Every word of the Koran is regarded as the utterance of Allah communicated in his words by the angel Gabriel to the Prophet. Koran signifies "recitation." It is also called *Forqan* (discrimination), the means by which man can discriminate between truth and falsehood, and *al-Kitab*, the prototype of all books. []

In the words of Abu Hanifah, founder of one of the four great schools of law:

The Koran is the speech of Allah, written in the copies, preserved in the memories, recited by the tongues, revealed to the Prophet. Our pronouncing, writing, and reciting the Koran is created, whereas the Koran itself is uncreated.⁹³ (U)

The recitation of the Koran and the writing of it are sacred acts. A Muslim scholar points out that whatever one's nationality, the Koran, as well as one's prayers, are in Arabic, otherwise he would not be Muslim.

The efficacy of canonical prayers, litanies, invocations, etc., is contained not only in the content but also in the very sounds and reverberations of the sacred language. (U)

The Koran is not a law code, and Muhammad was not a lawgiver in any Western sense. The Koran is an appeal to mankind and to the Arabs in particular, to obey the law of God which has already been revealed or can be discovered. []

In the last years of his career the Prophet, as a ruler, was faced with legal problems on which he sought divine guidance, and the answers that he uttered in a trance are a legal element in the Koran. There are said to be 500 such texts, but most of these deal with ritual, and only about 80 deal with legal material. These 80

⁹³ Abu Hanifah, *Al-fiqh al-Akbar*, translated by A.J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed* (Cambridge, 1932), p. 189. (U)

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texts have been subjected to intensive interpretation to extract the maximum amount of meaning from them, and nonlegal texts in the Koran, moral exhortations, and even divine promises have been construed by analogy to afford legal rules. []

orthodox Islamic exposition, the theory came first, and the practice was built upon it. Much of the law is pre-Islamic, and all of it had a history before being cast into the theoretical mold. Nevertheless, the theory influenced the whole structure of the law and is still a vital force. []

Aside from the legal content, the Koran is interpreted on several levels. There is a tradition relating to the sixth Shiite Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq; the book of God contains four things: the literary expression, the allusion, the hidden meaning, and the spiritual truths. The literary expression is for the common people, the allusion is for the elite, the hidden meaning is for the friends of God (or saints), and the spiritual truths are for the prophets.⁹⁴ This multilevel interpretation provides the basis for Sufism and for schools within Shia Islam, some of which approach heresy. []

The *sunna* is to be found in traditions of what the Prophet said, did, or by his silence approved. There are about 40 *hadith* of great importance which are "sacred sayings," traditions in which God speaks through Muhammad. There are also traditions of the Prophet himself and traditions that embody legal decisions of the first four caliphs or of other "Companions" of the Prophet. For the Sunni the authority of traditions of the caliphs and "Companions" is less than the traditions that have the authority of the Prophet himself. According to Shiite principles of jurisprudence, however, an authentic tradition attributed to the imams is as binding as the direct word of God through Muhammad. When, for example, Khomeini quotes a *hadith* as he frequently does in his *Islamic Government*, he is not relating a parable or narrating a story to make a point. He is quoting something that has the force of law. []

The *Sunna* and *Hadith*

The *sunna* is the practice of the Prophet. His authority comes next only to the Koran and is not derived from the community's acceptance of him as a person of authority but from Divine Will as expressed in the Koran. For this reason the Moslem community accepts all of Muhammad's verbal commands, his deeds, and his tacit approval as the way of life, a binding factor, and a model that ought to be followed. []

There was wholesale fabrication of tradition from almost the earliest period. Many of the "Companions" had known the Prophet intimately, and it was a small step from feeling confident of what the Prophet's view would have been to believing that he had in fact so decided. It is a step that could be taken without realizing that one had passed from opinion to fact. Many of the traditions were obvious attempts to read back the controversies, or the conditions of later ages, into the earlier period from which guidance was sought. []

A *hadith* is the story of a particular occurrence in which the Prophet was involved, the *sunna* is the act that occurs.⁹⁵ []

Aside from the Koran, the most obvious source of information concerning the law of God to which inquirers could turn was the practice of the Prophet and of his companions, so far as their practice could be taken as evidence of what he approved. Normally, theory follows practice by a process of generalization from observed facts. Religion is older than its theology and law is older than jurisprudence. Yet according to

Muslim scholars who realized that there was such falsification set out to examine the traditions with whatever critical apparatus they possessed to determine the authenticity of *hadith*. This apparatus suffered from a substantial defect that is still inherent in the Islamic theory of evidence—the presumption that a respectable man who would not willingly tell a lie is therefore necessarily telling the truth. The influence of faulty memory, of wishful thinking, the danger of reading back the present into the past, the

⁹⁴ This *hadith* is related in Nasr, *Ideals and Realities in Islam*, p. 59. (U)

⁹⁵ There are many great collections of *hadith* which serve as standard references. Large parts of the Sunni collections have been translated into English. The Shiites have their own collections. Although there is much duplication, the Shias reject some *hadith* accepted by the Sunnis and have *hadith* that are unique. In general, the differences revolve around the right of succession of Ali. The great Shia collections have not been translated into English, and there seem to be only six sets of the major Persian language collection in the United States. (U)

25X1 coloring of facts by personal opinion, and of the effect of leading questions seem to be little recognized.⁹⁶ []

One Western scholar has argued strongly that at about the time of the founders of the great Sunni law schools and before the time of the six great collections of traditions in the ninth century, there was deliberate forgery of traditions by responsible lawyers on such a scale that no purely legal tradition of the Prophet himself can be regarded as above suspicion.⁹⁷ This is a view that every good Muslim would necessarily have to reject. The Muslim tends to see such studies as a plot against Islam. In the words of one scholar:

From the Islamic point of view this (critical examination of *hadith* by European orientalists) is one of the most diabolical attacks made against the whole structure of Islam.⁹⁸

CPYRGHT But another Muslim apologist sees an even more sinister and longstanding plot:

A number of Jews disguised as Muslims entered the government of Othman (the third caliph, 644-656) and began to falsify the traditions and the *hadith* and consequently weakened the foundation of belief.⁹⁹ (U)

25X1 If a tradition is to be found in any of the great collections that are accepted by the Sunnis or the Shias, it has canonical authority. The growth of spurious tradition was not stopped, however, by the establishment of these canonical collections, and contradictory opinions habitually cite contradictory traditions. One writer says frankly, "The *hadith* is the form in which we state our conclusions."¹⁰⁰ []

Aql is human reason or intellect. A tradition holds that "The first thing God created was *aql*." *Aql* permits the truth to be discovered when texts differ or contradict each other. Legal rules made by *aql* must be regarded

⁹⁶ Khadduri and Liebesny, *Law in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute), Vol. I, p. 193-194. (U)

⁹⁷ J. Schacht, *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1950). (U)

⁹⁸ Tabatabai, *Shi'ite Islam*, p. 119, note 24, by the editor Seyyed Hossein Nasr. (U)

⁹⁹ "The Nation Does Not Want Christian Advisers," *Ganj-e-Shayegan* (Tehran: Publication of the Iranian Students Association, 1332 (1952)), p. 1-7. Bazarqan, Taleqani, and Sahabi also wrote for this publication. (U)

¹⁰⁰ Quoted by G. H. Bousquet, *Precis de Droit Musulman*, second edition (Algiers, 1947), p. 31. (U)

as parts of the *Shariah* and people must obey them. In Shia law God is the legislator because he created *aql* to make law. *Aql* makes law directly, and God makes law indirectly. Law made by *aql* is as the law of God in that it is a precept of faith and a social duty, and its obedience is obligatory. Finally, Shia jurists reject the private use of reason as a rule of law. This is *ray*, a Sunni but not a Shia doctrine.¹⁰¹ []

Ijma or consensus is used by both Sunnis and Shias as a source of law, but they define it differently. The Sunnis recognize consensus of the community and consensus of the great law teachers. For the Shia *ijma* means "agreement of those who interpret in their religious judgments the commands of the imams on a particular question,"¹⁰² that is, the *mujtaheds*. []

The Law in Practice

Administration of Justice. It is useful to look at a few instances of the application of Islamic law in Iran today. The public record only lists the charges and the sentences. The reasoning behind the sentences is unavailable and probably unobtainable. The results were reached by Islamic judges based on Islamic law and are ipso facto fair. []

The execution of Jewish businessman Habib Elghanian was a good example of the strict application of the *Shariah*, although the court's refusal—or inability—to explain its actions in a manner comprehensible to its Western critics obscured the juridical basis of the sentence. The case also casts light on the limitations imposed by the Islamic concept of protection of minorities. []

Christians and Jews (and later, Zoroastrians and Sabians) were considered as "People of the Book"—those who received revelation before the final one through Muhammad—and entitled to full protection when living in a Moslem society. In return they paid a yearly poll tax but did not serve in the army. In addition the "People of the Book" were expected to pledge loyalty to Muslim authorities, not speak ill of Islam, and abstain from any act that might prejudice

¹⁰¹ This brief paragraph does not do justice to the concept of *aql*, which is also tied to Islamic philosophical thought. A full discussion is found in A. Ezzati, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islamic Law and Jurisprudence* (Lahore, 1976). (U)

¹⁰² Khadduri and Liebesny, *Law in the Middle East* (Washington, D. C., The Middle East Institute), Vol. I, p. 127. (U)

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the beliefs and security of Muslims. It is this last provision that was at the root of Elghanian's conviction. As a contributor of funds to Israel he was performing an act detrimental to Muslims while enjoying the protection of a Muslim state. Again, the crime was not against the state of Iran as much as it was against the nation of Islam. []

The more sophisticated members of the clergy may make a clear distinction between Zionists and Jews. The clergy must make the distinction as the Jews are People of the Book and have a defined status in Islam. The bulk of the poorly educated and badly informed masses that make up Khomeini's following do not make the same distinction. Some of the clergy may share the popular view, for the Jews, while "protected," are also depicted in the Koran and in Islamic history as opponents of Muhammad. []

Muslim social practices of the past, and sometimes the recent past, which placed minorities clearly in an inferior position may have only a flimsy basis in the Koran or *hadith*, but they became so imbedded in the social fabric as to have the force of law. In Iran until Reza Shah's time Zoroastrians and Jews were required to wear distinctive garb, non-Muslims were forbidden to ride horses, and, if on a donkey, had to dismount when meeting a Muslim. They could not build houses higher than their Muslim neighbors.¹⁰³ []

Even with legal disabilities removed, under the Pahlavis, discrimination remained, and the result—especially for Christian minorities such as the Armenians and Assyrians—was a general lack of commitment to Iran as a state. With the return of Muslim dominance the non-Muslims will be even less likely to be integrated into Iranian society. []

The jurists are unanimous that non-Muslim subjects are to be excluded from public office. Several Koranic passages and *hadith* are quoted to support this view. One of them is Koran IV:28, "Let not the believers take disbelievers for friends in preference to believers,

¹⁰³ For Zoroastrians see Mary Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 11f. For Jews in earlier days see Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, Vol. I, p. 165, 333 and Vol. II, p. 240. Before the advent of Western clothing a man's religious status, as well as his social class and often his profession, were proclaimed by the clothes he wore. (U)

whoso doeth that hath no connection with Allah. . . ." A *hadith* of the Prophet supports this view, "Do not ask for their advice, do not refer to their opinions, hold yourself from them, and do not live with them." Finally, another *hadith*, "Jews and Christians are traitors." []

In spite of the jurists' opinions the facts have been quite the opposite. Minorities, especially in the early centuries of Islam, played prominent roles in government and politics. They frequently possessed administrative and business skills that the Muslims themselves disdained to cultivate. The jurists' views, however, are available to provide legitimacy for any moves Khomeini might make to exclude non-Muslim Iranians from public office.¹⁰⁴ []

Two standard charges that have been made against nearly all of those so far executed by the Khomeini regime have been "spreading corruption on earth" and "warring with God." This derives from a verse in the Koran:

The only reward for those who make war upon Allah and his Messenger and strive after corruption in the land will be that they will be killed or crucified, or have their hands and feet cut off, or will be expelled out of the land. . . . (Koran v:33) []

An examination of seven Shia commentaries on this passage shows a wide variety of treatments. Two of the commentaries can be ignored. One is an interpretation of specific grammatical forms, the other a rather brief and elementary account of the generally accepted meaning of the verse. The other commentaries are more substantial, but provide differing interpretations. Most refer to specific *hadiths* to support their interpretations. []

The most usual explanation for the genesis of this verse is that a group of people arrived in Medina and professed Islam. They were ill, and Muhammad sent them out with his camel herds to recuperate. When they were well, they killed the shepherds and stole the

¹⁰⁴ This and many more problems are discussed in Antoine Fattal, *Le Statut Legal des non-Musulmans en Pays d'Islam* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1958). (U)

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camels. When they were captured, Muhammad uttered this verse and then cut off their hands and feet and blinded them. []

How does this apply? One commentator remarks that "the verse is not devoid of ambiguity in general"—scant comfort for those who suffered an unambiguous death.¹⁰⁵ []

Several *hadith* relate interpretations of this verse. Some suggest that this is the punishment for those who have apostatized, but others argue that this cannot be the case because death is mandatory for the apostate and not severance of limbs, exile, or crucifixion.¹⁰⁶

Other commentators contend that this verse is of general application, "It is known that the cause of its revelation does not necessitate the restriction of its external meaning."¹⁰⁷ []

A common interpretation is that "one who wages war" is anyone who resorts to armed violence, and "spreading corruption" meant highway robbery specifically and disturbing public security by terrorizing people in general—"Those who spread corruption, which is killing, looting and highway robbery."¹⁰⁸ []

The type of reasoning that the interpreters use is illustrated by the argument of one commentator that "waging war with God" is impossible except metaphorically, but "waging war with the Prophet" is literal. Since the meaning cannot be both metaphorical and literal, "The answer is that what is intended. . . is opposition to the Holy Law and its responsibilities."¹⁰⁹ []

¹⁰⁵ Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai, *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* (Tehran, 1382 (1962)), p. 325f. (U)

¹⁰⁶ Ali ibn Husayn al-Musavi al-Haeri al-Tehrani, *Muqtanayat al-Duwar* (Tehran, 1968), Vol. IV, p. 8f. (U)

¹⁰⁷ Tabatabai, *loc. cit.* (U)

¹⁰⁸ Husayn ibn Ahmad al-Husayni al-Shah Abd'al-Azimi, *Tafsir-e-Ithna 'Ashari*, (Rayy, 1956-61), pp. 61-63. (U)

¹⁰⁹ Al-Haeri-al Tehrani, p. 9. (U)

The contemporary scholar Tabatabai favors the widest interpretation.

It has a broad connotation that applies to the opposition to any legal decree and every act of oppression and excessiveness. . . what is meant by waging war and spreading corruption . . . is the disturbance of the general security. The general security is disturbed by the creation of public fear. . . .¹¹⁰

At any rate, in the words of one commentator "There is no higher corruption than killing Muslims, plundering their wealth, and violating their honor."¹¹¹ []

Much ingenuity was used in interpreting the meaning of the punishments prescribed in the verse. The manner of execution is by some described as with the sword, a not unreasonable interpretation given the pre-modern background. Clearly, however, the manner of execution is optional, or Khomeini's use of the firing squad in today's Iran would be an innovation and therefore forbidden. There is also some debate about the manner of dismemberment, but it is usually held that this should be the right hand and the left foot. One commentator insists that the thumb and the heel should remain, but others are not so charitable. Most commentators believe that this is the punishment for simple theft, while theft with killing calls for dismemberment followed by crucifixion. []

The precise meaning of "exile" is also debated. One commentator writes that it can also mean drowning, as "in this way they would be exiled from the realm of Islam. . . . It is possible that drowning and imprisonment are among the hidden meanings that were used by the pure imams."¹¹² Other commentators prescribe only driving the convicted one from one city to another. There are also discussions about the method and meaning of crucifixion whether before or after execution. The judge is generally held to have the option to fix the punishment according to the severity of the crime.¹¹³ []

¹¹⁰ Tabatabai, p. 326. (U)

¹¹¹ Hajj Mirza Mohammed Saqafi, *Ravan-e-Jadid* (Tehran; 1950), Vol. 2, p. 209. (U)

¹¹² Saqafi, *loc. cit.* (U)

¹¹³ Amputation or dismemberment has not been used as a punishment so far in Iran. (U)

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Only the modern commentator Tabatabai points out that this verse is connected with the preceding verse which mentions the Jews. Following the story of Cain killing Abel (although they are called only the sons of Adam), God said, as related in verse 32:

We decreed for the children of Israel that whosoever killeth a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption on earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, and whosoever saveth the life of one, it shall be as if he saved the life of all mankind. Our messengers came to them of old with clear proofs (of Allah's) sovereignty, but afterwards many of them became prodigals in the earth.

Tabatabai comments that this verse failed to include the appropriate punishment or judgment. Because of its contents, however, it (verse 32) is not free of connection with these verses (that is, verses 33 and 34) because of the punishment of the corruptors on earth and the thieves.¹¹⁴

Punishment for violation of Koranic prescriptions for private conduct is now replacing the earlier campaign against political crimes. There are some peculiarities, however, that may be more the result of excessive zeal than of strict interpretation of the *Shariah*.

The Koran states, "the adulterer and adulteress, scourge ye each of them with a hundred stripes, and let not pity withhold you from obedience to Allah . . ." (Koran, 24:2). The punishment is clear, but the accounts of the recent trials in Iran lack an important detail. Four unimpeachable witnesses of the act must be presented. The number of cases tried so far suggests a greater degree of exhibitionism—or of voyeurism—than expected.

The case of the man in Ahwaz who was forced to marry the prostitute with whom he was consorting is an interesting one. Marriage is not valid if it is under duress, and one can suspect that the Ahwaz marriage was entered into with a lack of enthusiasm. On the other hand, the Koran 24:3 says "The adulterer shall not marry save an adulteress or an idolatress, and the adulteress none shall marry save an adulterer or an idolater." It appears that in the opinion of the Ahwaz religious judge, this verse was taken as an order rather than as simply a limitation on marriage. If there were

courts of appeal, this marriage might be declared invalid, but as it is, the husband can take consolation in the fact that he has saved one woman from a life of shame.

Finally, the Koranic verse that follows the one dealing with warring against God and his prophets contains a stipulation for amnesty.¹¹⁵ "Except those who repent before ye overpower them. For know that Allah is forgiving, merciful."

Based on this verse, therefore, one could hope to escape punishment by surrendering and repenting. At least two commentators quoting *hadith* and the opinion of eminent jurists support this interpretation.¹¹⁶ In practice, any of the Shah's former officials who might hope to escape by appealing to this verse would be well advised to forget it. Somewhere in the thousands of commentaries and previous legal rulings a judge can probably find a loophole that closes the door of forgiveness.

The kind of punishments that might be expected for specific offenses could be known with certainty only by examining the great mass of *fiqh* literature where such cases are detailed. There is no doubt that Khomeini, if he is not following precedent, is setting the tone for punishment in Iran. His position is clear and is worth quoting at length. He is commenting on criticism of Koranic punishments:

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I wonder how these people think. They carry out the death sentence, under the pretext of the law, against several people for smuggling 10 grams of heroin. . . . When they legislate these inhumane laws under the pretext of preventing corruption, they see no harshness in them. I do not condone dealing in heroin, but I oppose death as a penalty for dealing in heroin. Dealing in heroin must be fought but on a basis compatible with the dimensions of the crime. . . . traffic accidents on the highways, incidents of suicide, and even heroin addiction—according to some people—are the consequences of drunkenness and alcohol drinking. Yet, they do not ban alcohol because the West has permitted it. This is why they sell and buy alcohol with utter freedom. Woe to Islam from them! If an alcohol drinker is to be given 80 lashes or an unmarried adulterer is to be punished with 100 lashes and if a

¹¹⁵ Koran 5:34. (U)

¹¹⁶ Al-Tehrani, *Muqtanayat*, p. 11; Tabatabai, *Tafsir*, p. 40. (U)

¹¹⁴ Tabatabai, *Al-Mizan*, p.325. (U)

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married adulterer or adulteress is to be stoned, you hear them scream; these are cruel and harsh sentences derived from the harshness of the Arabs, whereas the provisions of the penal code in Islam came to prevent fornication, corruption, and abomination in a big and vast nation. . . . It is obvious that the need for implementing the laws was not exclusive to the Prophet's age and that this need continues because Islam is not limited by time or place. Because Islam is immortal, it must be implemented and observed forever. If what was permissible by Muhammad is permissible until the day of resurrection and what was forbidden by Muhammad is forbidden to the day of resurrection, then Muhammad's restrictions must not be suspended, his teachings must not be neglected, punishment must not be abandoned.¹¹⁷ (U)

In his days, the Prophet, may God's prayers be on him, was not content with explaining and conveying the laws. He also implemented them. He punished, cut off the thief's hand, lashed and stoned, and ruled justly. A successor is needed for such acts.¹¹⁸ (U)

The Role of Women

Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the others, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. . . . (Koran 4:34) []

A major policy of both Reza Shah and Shah Mohammad Reza was to improve the status of women. Reza Shah forbade the wearing of the *chador*, the major outer symbol of a woman's status, and opened the universities to women both as students and instructors. Under Mohammad Reza, women gained full rights of citizenship including the vote, and women for the first time became parliamentary representatives and senators, cabinet ministers and ambassadors. []

The Pahlavis, however, built on a movement that had been under way for decades. With the increase of European influence in the 19th century, women,

¹¹⁷ Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, p. 5 and 6. (U)

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 7. (U)

mostly of the upper classes, began their own agitation to improve their status. []

In the early 1900s during the Constitutional Revolution a group of women—including two daughters of Nasser el-Din Shah—formed a secret Women's Freedom Society, and another daughter (together with her daughters) joined a dervish order whose meetings they attended unveiled. Somewhat later (1911) a group of high-ranking women formed the National Ladies Society for the specific purpose of supporting the constitution against royal and foreign intrigues. Daughters and granddaughters of some of the founders are still active in women's affairs. The society sponsored mass demonstrations and other activities not only as constitutionalists but also as women. []

For nearly two decades women struggled to establish girls' schools. Generally, the clergy was opposed to this, but at least one *mujtahed*, who was also a *Majlis* deputy, encouraged his wife to open a girls' school. His prestige as a *mujtahed* was so high that there was little agitation against this school. But another headmistress for two years concealed her activities from her husband. Her school was prestigious enough that another distinguished *mujtahed* sent his daughter there. []

In spite of opposition, women's education continued to grow, aided substantially by the activities of schools established by American missionaries and by a Francophile Iranian who set up a French-oriented school. []

An increasing number of the intelligentsia, both men and women, became interested in women's education. The first state school for girls was established in 1918, and the tempo speeded up after 1925. The social pressures are well described by one participant in the women's movement:

Change in the social environment was slow. Most of the people were stuck in the old rut of old notions and habits, and many were susceptible to obscurantist preachings. The growing number of enlightened families were generally cautious of getting out of step with their neighbors: they were eager enough to send their

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daughters to school, but not bold enough to think of allowing them to work, let alone unveil.¹¹⁹ (U)

The Women's Teacher Training College was established in 1924 and renamed the Preliminary Teachers Training College in 1934. Although conditions were improving, the girls apparently found it necessary from time to time to beat up the "louts and street urchins who shouted obscene words or scurrilous verses at them."¹²⁰

Adult education for women, and newspapers and magazines aimed at women followed. One woman publisher had her journal suppressed, and she herself was exiled to Qom, probably considered by the authorities as the ultimate sentence for a feminist. She was not released until Reza Shah ascended the throne. Her daughter is Dr. Farrokhru Parsa, Iran's first woman cabinet minister (1968-1974) and until the Revolution the Iranian Ambassador to Denmark.

Under Reza Shah the position of women continued to improve slowly. On 7 January 1936, the veil was abolished, although a few women had abandoned it earlier. One mullah, when asked what should be done about one such case, remarked resignedly that it was just an example of the prevailing lawlessness and "the chaos preceding the end of the world."

Even earlier attempts by some women to change the color of the *chador* from the traditional black to another dark color was met with riots and beatings. Reza Shah's edict was, for the clergy, a revolutionary act for which they never forgave him. Khomeini, as usual, is forceful on this point. "We declare forcefully that the shameful behavior of refusing to wear the veil is contrary to the law of God and the Prophet."¹²¹

Although the *chador* returned primarily as an outer garment with little religious content after World War II, light colors became popular.

¹¹⁹ Badr al Moluk Bamdad, *From Darkness Into Light: Women's Emancipation in Iran*, Trans. by F.R.C. Bagley (Hicksville, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1977), p. 56. (U)

¹²⁰ Bamdad, *loc. cit.* (U)

¹²¹ Ayatollah Khomeini, *Principes politiques, philosophiques, sociaux et religieux*, Jean Marie Xaviere, ed. (Paris: Editions Libres-Hallier, 1979), p. 38. (U)

Most of those who are now donning the *chador* as a sign of protest probably do not realize that they are undoing what three generations of women, and not the Pahlavis, agitated for. The Pahlavi dynasty did not create the women's movement, but rather encouraged and pushed a movement that was well established and used it to support their concept of a modern Iran.

The last 40 years have seen a slow but steady increase in the scope of women's activities. Under the protection of Reza Shah, women's organizations flourished, especially in the area of social services. Under Mohammad Reza, women not only gained the right to vote but also moved into positions previously held exclusively by men.

In the parliament that was disbanded by Khomeini's victory there were 20 women, 18 in the *majlis* and two in the Senate. The Iranian foreign service had 39 women diplomats out of a total of 580 members in 1974, the last date for which figures are available. Women have also been serving as judges since 1968, and the increase of women in the business world, although not in high positions, has been notable.

In respect to women's rights, Khomeini's "revolution" must be considered profoundly counterrevolutionary. The reversion of Iranian women to their status in previous centuries seems likely to be written into the new Iranian constitution.

Three proposed articles seem designed to keep women in the role assigned them by traditional Islam:

- Article 11: "The fundamental unit of Islamic society is the family, and this will take precedence over individual members of it."
- Article 12: "Family laws should provide mothers with material and spiritual opportunities so they can attend to the highly valued maternal duties that are entrusted to them."
- Article 28: "Every person has the right to choose the profession he wishes, provided it is not in contravention of Islam or the public interest." The public interest was already defined in article 11, and it seems clear that these articles are designed to give a civil coloration to Islamic law.

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Figure 12.
Women demonstrating against Khomeini

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Many of the middle and upper class women who supported the Khomeini movement are already disenchanted; others try for rationalizations. A German interviewer asked some of the new leaders of the Iranian Women's Organization about the Koranic provision that two female witnesses are required to equal the testimony of one man.¹²² The women explained that women by nature are more sensitive than men, since they all become mothers, and, therefore, the statement of one woman cannot be trusted. The interviewer then pointed out that if all women are equally emotional since they will all become mothers, it is meaningless to listen to a second woman. After a discussion the women answered, "Only God knows people. He created them. He knows why He made this law."¹²³ How long such an attitude can be sustained is

¹²² And call to witness, from among your men, two witnesses. And if two men be not at hand, then a man and two women such as ye choose for witnesses so, that if one of them errs, the other can remind her. (Koran 2:282) In Islamic law testimony by witnesses is superior to written testimony, and "proof" means the testimony of witnesses. Written testimony alone is not "proof." (U)

¹²³ *Stern*, 10 May 1979, pp. 92-100. Koranic commentator Mahmud Taleqani writes, "Since a woman, because of the special disturbances that she has, shows less precision and attention to the recording of this type of matter and to bearing witness to it, and she falls under the influence of emotions more readily, on matters

questionable. If Islamicization is carried to its logical conclusion, the Women's Organization will be abolished. []

Marriage

There are only about a score of passages in the Koran dealing with women, wives, marriage, and divorce. Although women are treated as subordinate, the Koran provides a status superior to that generally prevailing in Arabia at the time the Koran was revealed. The jurists in the course of the centuries have interpreted those, and other passages, to provide the detailed legislation governing the position of women in society. The major Sunni schools of law differ only in minor points. The Shiites have at least one major difference, temporary marriage. []

Marriage in Islam is treated as a civil contract conforming to the usual laws of contract. A betrothal is a promise to make a contract, and either party may withdraw from it. The marriage contract is concluded

relating to herself, she pays more attention and is more precise." Another commentator notes only that women are emotional creatures, and therefore a second woman is required to counterbalance this. (U)

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Figure 13.
Women demonstrating for Khomeini

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by an offer and an acceptance, both made on the same occasion and in the presence of two witnesses. There must be no impediment of relationship or religion.¹²⁴ No other religious rites or ceremonies are required, although they are encouraged. ☐

The Iranian Family Law of 1932 embodies much of the *Shariah* law with some additional measures borrowed from European law. The clergy at the time failed to present any effective opposition, leading some modernizers to argue that the clergy had therefore approved the law.¹²⁵ The Family Protection Law of 1967, hailed as finally bringing the law in accordance with generally accepted modern principles, marked a clear break with the *Shariah*. ☐

For traditionalists such as Khomeini both laws are illegal, not only because they lack the approval of the

¹²⁴ The Koran (4:22ff) spells out the forbidden degrees of relationship including a ban on marrying two sisters at the same time. Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Sabians are forbidden to marry Muslim women. Muslim men may marry Christians or Jews (but not Zoroastrians, who at any rate do not normally marry outside their own faith), but such mixed marriages are not recommended. (u)
¹²⁵ "No statement is imputed to a man who keeps silence, but silence is tantamount to a declaration where one is necessary." This legal principle of Muslim jurists is quoted in M. Khadduri and H. Liebesny, *Law in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1955), Vol. I, p. 192. (u)

clergy, but also because they were passed by an illegal regime that did not have the right to legislate. ☐ 25X1

Khomeini considers divorces obtained by women under the 1967 law to be invalid. All such women are considered still married, and if anyone divorced under this law remarries, the result is adultery and is to be punished as such. Children of such a marriage are bastards and cannot inherit. ☐ 25X1

Given Khomeini's propensity to consider anything done under the Pahlavis illegal, it would not be surprising if he, or a like-minded successor, declared illegal any marriage not carried out according to strict *Shariah* law. This could affect thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, and bring into question legitimacy of birth and inheritance. ☐ 25X1

The traditional view of the position of women is best illustrated by an interview that Ayatollah Shariatmadari gave to *Der Spiegel*: CPYRGHT

Spiegel: It will not be easy for you when you begin dismantling basic rights such as equal rights for women.

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Shariatmadari: We are not doing that. In our country, women have the same rights as men. This is written in the Koran.

Spiegel: Ayatollah Khomeini, however, interprets the Koran differently. He wants to introduce polygamy and force the women to wear the *chador*.

Shariatmadari: The Koran provides that young women cover their body in such a way that the contours can no longer be determined and that only the face is left visible. However, this need not be the *chador*. We accept any piece of clothing which will meet these requirements.¹²⁶

Spiegel: You have abolished the family law issued by the Shah. This means that divorce again becomes a one-sided affair of the man.

Shariatmadari: No, to the Moslem matrimony is a treasure very much worthy of protection. But if it happens that one spouse becomes ill, then the husband may get a divorce.¹²⁷

Spiegel: But not the wife?

Shariatmadari: Under certain circumstances the wife, too, may file suit for divorce.¹²⁸ Islam tries to prevent divorces at any cost. But there are situations in which it is better to separate the spouses, such as a physician sometimes may be forced to amputate a diseased member.

Spiegel: What about polygamy? Will a man be allowed to have four wives in your Islamic republic?

Shariatmadari: This is an often misunderstood commandment. A man may have four wives only when he can be equally just to all of them. This means he may not give preference to any one of them, and he must be able to provide for them.¹²⁹ Besides, this commandment does not play a great role in practice. Just try to find those men in Iran who have four wives; perhaps one in a thousand.

Spiegel: Because polygamy was prohibited by the Shah.

Shariatmadari: No, it is also a commandment of common sense. Yet there are also justified reasons in favor of polygamy. It may happen that the first wife is sterile. In that case, a man should take another wife in addition.¹³⁰

Spiegel: And the third and the fourth?

Shariatmadari: Oh well, there are many men who are equipped with such tremendous sexual potency that they cannot be satisfied with one or two. Should they preferably frequent a brothel?

Spiegel: There are also women who do not feel satisfied by their men. Then they, too, should be allowed to pick a second or third husband.

Shariatmadari: These needs are nonexistent in women. And just think of war times when you often have more women than men. After all, you have had that in Germany. If the men do not look after the supernumerary women, this is bound to end up in mass prostitution. (U)

Temporary Marriage

The institution of temporary marriage is one of the major differences between Sunnis and Shias. Temporary marriage or *mutah* is marriage for a fixed period of time—for as little as five minutes or for a lifetime—and for a stipulated payment to the wife. This pre-Islamic Arab custom was followed by the early Muslims. The Sunnis say it was forbidden by Muhammad, the Shias that it was not forbidden until Omar, the second caliph. Since that time *mutah* has not been practiced by Sunnis. The Shias, however, do not

¹²⁶ This seems to be an interpretation of Koran 24 verse 31, "And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veil over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husband's fathers or their sons or their husband's sons or their brothers . . . or their women or their slaves or male attendants who lack vigor or children who know nought of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment . . ." (U)

¹²⁷ This may derive from a judicial opinion or a *hadith*. It does not appear in the Koran in this form. (U)

¹²⁸ A wife may get a divorce with the permission of an Islamic judge, who must determine that she has been wronged. Divorce is automatic by mutual consent. Provisions for divorce may be written into the marriage contract. (U)

¹²⁹ Koran II, verses 3 and 4. (U)

¹³⁰ *ibid.* (U)

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recognize the legitimacy of the caliphs, and *mutah* was not forbidden by any of the Imams. ☐

The Shiite argument for *mutah* is that permanent marriage obviously is inadequate since prostitution continues to exist in the world. Inasmuch as "adultery and fornication are according to Islam among the most deadly of poisons, destroying the order and purity of human life, Islam has legitimized temporary marriage . . . by virtue of which it becomes distinct from adultery and fornication and free from their evils and corruption."¹³¹ The woman must be single, married to only one man at a time, and must remain unmarried for two months and five days, one half the time that a woman must remain unmarried following divorce from a permanent marriage. ☐

Navab Safavi, founder of the fundamentalist Fedayan-e-Islam, in his scheme for an Islamic government urged the creation of a ministry of *mutah* to encourage temporary marriage. He argued that:

The number of women in the world has always been greater than the number of men, and many women have been and are without husbands (or many men are traveling and away from their wives), or many men cannot afford financially to marry and support a woman permanently. The holy sense of sexual need exists in them and is always hungry and active, and if there were not a moral and legal way to satisfy this need, eventually they would commit adultery, the consequences of which would be diseases, immorality, and corruption of the society.

So the best way to prevent this danger is the holy, legal way of concubine, for the holy laws of Islam have established it and have considered it holier than permanent marriage. Its eternal reward is multiple and is superior to that of the regular one. This unusual but moral and religious way of preventing adultery does not exist in any other law or religion except Islam. All over the universe, many commit adultery due to the hardships of permanent marriage, and societies try to prevent this corruption by stupid and meaningless advice. This cannot be done by advice, and the only way is to adopt the Islamic principle of temporary marriage.¹³² (U)

¹³¹ Tabatabai, *Shi'ite Islam*, p.227f. (U)

¹³² Navab Safavi, *Rahnema-ye Haqa'iq* (The Guide of Truth) translated in Adele K. Ferdows, "Religion in Iranian Nationalism. The Study of the Fedayan-i-Islam," Ph.D. Dissertation Indiana University, 1967. p. 42 (U)

Temporary marriage was discouraged under the Pahlavis, and neither the 1932 Family Law nor the 1967 law recognize it. Under Khomeini this venerable institution may find new life. ☐

Observations on the Present

It seems likely that the entire legal system of Iran as it has existed for more than a generation will be overturned unless a secular government can achieve enough power to prevent it. The replacement of the secular law code by the *Shariah* has made thousands of trained lawyers obsolete, but conversely it will provide lucrative jobs for previously underemployed *mujtaheds*. At best, the secular lawyers will be reduced to little more than errand boys for the religious judges, and the position of defense counsel, even when it is permitted, would require more courage than skill. ☐

The rudiments of a new legal system were established in April 1979 after widespread criticism over the operations of the drumhead courts. The system presently consists of a prosecutor-general, appointed by the Revolutionary Committee with the approval of Khomeini. He can create provincial branches of his office as required. ☐

A court has five members. The senior member and the court administrator, who is appointed by the Revolutionary Committee and approved by Khomeini, must be an Islamic judge, a *ghazi*, and, therefore, a *mujtahed*. He has the final word on the admissibility of evidence. This is a permanent appointment. The second member is a "lawyer" elected by the "judges," but there is no further information on who or what either the lawyer or the judges are. This is also a permanent appointment. The third permanent member, equally obscure, is described as "someone trusted by the people and aware of the principles of the Islamic Revolution." The last two members of the court are temporary members described as being "chosen from the honest groups of the community." Submission of evidence will be in accordance with the rules of Islamic jurisprudence." There is no habeas corpus, bail, access to counsel, calling of defense witnesses, or appeal. ☐

CPYRGHT Ten years ago Khomeini complained in his *Islamic Government* that:

Those foreign laws caused the Moslem society numerous problems Whoever is an individual in a juridical or legal case in Iran, or in similar states, must spend a long life to win such a case. . . . We find that the present judiciary laws intend for the people nothing but hardship. The case on which the Shari'a judge used to make a decision in two or three days now takes twenty years to settle.¹³³ (U)

Seyed Mohammad Hosein Tabatabai, an eminent theologian, reaffirms categorically that Islam is not simply a democratic system, any more than it is a Communist system. It is of a different order. The decrees of the Islamic community, as distinct from the unchangeable laws of Islam, are based not on the wishes of the majority, but on the truth and depend for their stability on a realization of what is true. A true Islamic community would be both knowledgeable and pious and would, therefore, "never prefer its own lustful desires over what was right and what was true."¹³⁴ []

The fiery Ayatollah Alameh Nuri holds the same view, although he states it more bluntly: "Other than in the kilogram democracy, where men are counted like cucumbers and eggs, numerical majority is not the criterion in the Islamic state."¹³⁵ []

A representative government in the usually accepted sense is clearly of no consequence. The main thing is that the jurisprudents should rule with the government acting as a supporting mechanism. []

Ayatollah Khomeini's *Islamic Government* is something of a misnomer. It is not programmatic or organizational but is mostly a series of proofs demonstrating the right of the jurisprudents to rule. The rest of the book consists of exhortations to his listeners to fight tyranny and spread the truth. A sketch of

¹³³ Khomeini, *Islamic Government*, p. 4. (U)

¹³⁴ See Lambton's discussion in "A Reconsideration of the *Marja' Taqlid* . . . p. 128 ff. (U)

¹³⁵ *Der Spiegel*, 12 Feb 1979, translated in JPRS 073101, Translations on the Middle East, no. 1930, 28 March 79, p. 66. (U)

Khomeini's argument is informative. Throughout he uses *hadith* to support his contentions and to refute opposite or alternative conclusions.

- The need for a government is enjoined by the *hadith*. "People have been ordered to observe certain strictures and not to violate them because violating the restrictions corrupts people." The only way to accomplish this is for God to appoint a trustee over the people, for without someone to make sure that they did what they should and refrained from what is forbidden, "nobody would abandon his pleasure." Therefore government is necessary.¹³⁶
- "Islamic government is not despotic but constitutional. However, it is not constitutional in the well-known sense of the word which is represented in the parliamentary system or in peoples' councils. It is constitutional in the sense that those in charge of affairs observe a number of conditions and rules underlined in the Koran and in the Sunna. . . ." ¹³⁷

Khomeini here is reflecting an argument current in the period of the Constitutional Revolution over what is constitutionalism—*mashrutah*? Most early writers took it to mean "conditional," deriving it from the Arabic work *shart*, condition. It may actually come from French *la charte*, which then treated as an Arabic root would produce *mashrutah*. There is no doubt that the liberal constitutionalists understood *mashrutah* in the European sense, as this was what they were fighting for, and this is the definition that prevailed until Khomeini took over.

- Islamic government is a government of law. A person ignorant of law is not qualified to rule. "It is an acknowledged fact that the jurisprudents are the rulers over the kings . . . the real rulers are the jurisprudents, and the sultans are nothing but people working for them."

¹³⁶ Khomeini is repeating an old and well-known argument. The problem of rulership has occupied the attention of Islamic jurists for centuries, and this is the usual formulation. (U)

¹³⁷ The argument is found in detail in Abol Hadi Hairi, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran*, p. 189 ff. (U)

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- "The rule of the jurispudent is a subjective matter dictated by the *Shariah* as the *Shariah* considers one of us as a trustee over a minor. The task of a trustee over an entire people is not different from that of a trustee over minors, except quantitatively."

Khomeini repeats these arguments again in various forms, buttressing his statements by quoting relevant *hadith*. Beyond this he offers nothing on the composition and functioning of an Islamic government. He may be uninterested in such detail or believes that since any good Muslim knows how Muhammad and the imams ruled, an explanation is not necessary. Other Shia writers have done better. The Fedayan-e-Islam had a considerably more detailed—if unrealistic—program and organizational plans,¹³⁸ and Pakistani Shias have written at length on this problem.¹³⁹ []

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Khomeini's views are enthusiastically accepted by his hardcore followers, but less so by others who also are looking for an Islamic government. The conflict has not yet come to a head, but emerging. A Western convert to Shia Islam, and a disciple of Shariatmadari, although avoiding criticism of Khomeini, says:

If individuals claim to create an interest group out of Shi'ite doctrine . . . in other words, a Vatican style exclusive elite class with Papal infallibility and the right to condemn all who oppose it to a Spanish inquisition—then this is . . . neither Shi'ism nor Iran."¹⁴⁰ (U)

An American-based Iranian professor contends that "neither the secular liberals nor the Marxists nor even the Muslim freedom fighters known as the Mujahidin ever contemplated a Muslim theocracy headed by Khomeini as a substitute for the Shah's dictatorship."¹⁴¹ However, another American-based Iranian professor insists that "this imaginary schism . . . is the latest scheme of the counterrevolutionary elements in their continuing efforts to discredit or divide the Iranian revolutionaries."¹⁴² []

¹³⁸ See appendix B. (U)

¹³⁹ See for example, Seyed al-Razia Jaffery, *An Approach to Politics in Islam*. (U)

¹⁴⁰ Terry Graham, "Is Listening to Other Views Un-Islamic?" *Tehran Times*, 12 August 79. (U)

¹⁴¹ Mangol Bayat, "Iran's Real Revolutionary Leader," *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 May 1979. (U)

¹⁴² Mansour Farhang, "A Rebuttal," *Iran Voice* (Washington, D.C.) Vol. I, No. 5, 2 July 1979. (U)

Although these exchanges are by Iranian expatriates, they echo a growing conflict in Iran over what an Islamic government is. The closing of the newspaper *Ayandegan* in August 1979, about the only paper that dared criticize Khomeini's views, is a good indication of the state of prevailing opinion. []

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A Different Voice—Ali Shariati and His Writings

Shariati's Life and Death

Ali Shariati (1931-77) has become the guide for many of the current generation of religiously inclined intellectuals who seek in Islam an alternative to the Westernization they now deplore. In some ways he is in the mainstream of Shiism, and in others he is an innovator. Some among the clergy seem to find Shariati persuasive, although much that he teaches must clash with their traditional learning. []

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Shariati came to prominence in the 1960s when the impact of the rapid changes set in motion by the Shah's programs was being felt by a much larger portion of the population than ever before. A new brand of intellectual was emerging, one who unlike an earlier generation had not been assimilated by Western culture. The new intellectual comes from a modest middle or even lower class background where religious influence and traditional ways are likely to be strong, but his education derives from the secular, modernizing system introduced in the past half century. []

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Shariati can be seen as representing this group. His father, Sheikh Mohammad Taqi Shariati,¹⁴³ was head of the Society for the Diffusion of Islamic Fact and a professor at the Faculty of Theology of Mashhad University. He was also chairman of the board of directors of the Mashhad branch of the Society of Islamic Teaching, an organization founded in Tehran by Hojjat-al-Islam Haji Sheikh Abas-Ali Eslami. Shariati was considered a scholar in Islamic theology and Arabic. At the same time he was well educated in the modern sense and not a fanatic. One religious writer who opposed Ali Shariati wrote that Mohammad Shariati was the author of a Koran commentary that was full of errors and more like a

¹⁴³ Sometimes added is *Mazinani-Mashadi* indicating his origin in the village of Mazinan of Mashhad. When Ali Shariati left Iran in 1976, his passport was in the name of Ali Mazinani. (U)

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Sunni than a Shiite commentary.¹⁴⁴ Educated people who retained their religious convictions respected Sheikh Shariati, however, and enjoyed his sermons. He was an eloquent, stimulating speaker. Sheikh Shariati was a firm supporter of former Prime Minister Mossadeq. At that time the Society for the Diffusion of Islamic Fact joined with other religious bodies and commercial guilds to form the Union of Islamic Societies. The Union played an active political role in support of Mossadeq. Shariati was a leading candidate for the 17th *majlis*; the elections in Mashhad, however, were suspended by Prime Minister Mossadeq and never resumed. []

Shariati senior continued to be a Mossadeq partisan even after the Premier's fall. In 1957 he was arrested along with several others, but he was released soon afterwards. Thereafter, he refrained from overt political activity, confining his activities to religious teaching. []

Ali Shariati thus came from a family with a record of political opposition as well as a religious orientation that is not quite traditional Shiism. He was born in Mashhad in 1931 and educated at the University of Mashhad, where, if it is not hagiographical hyperbole, "he had numerous clashes of opinion with his teachers . . . his independence of thought and belief was demonstrated above all by his determined defense of truth and justice." He went on a government scholarship to France, where "he was chiefly concerned with the ideological and anti-imperialist movements that at the time were sweeping across the Islamic world. . . ."¹⁴⁵

Returning to Iran he became a fiery lecturer at the Hosseiniyeh Ershad. He was imprisoned several times, and when finally released went to England where he died in 1977. []

According to a partisan description of Shariati's last hours,¹⁴⁶ Shariati's wife and two daughters were to join

¹⁴⁴ Ali Ansari, *Difa'az Islam va Ruhaniyyat* (A Defense of Islam and the Clergy) Mashhad, 1973. Ansari, like Ali Shariati, was a lecturer at the Hosseiniyeh Ershad. (U)

¹⁴⁵ These quotes are from a book by Hamid Algar, *On the Sociology of Islam* (Berkeley, California: Mizan Press, 1979) as reprinted in *Iran Voice*, Vol. I, No. 5, 2 July 1979, published by the Iranian Embassy in Washington. (U)

¹⁴⁶ Tehran newspaper *Iranshahr*, 15 June 1977. (U)

him in England. Only his daughters arrived; his wife, according to this account, had been detained in Tehran by SAVAK. Shariati left London airport and "set out for home with his two daughters in a very disturbed state. Shariati talked for a long time with his two daughters, and in spite of the fact that they were all tired, they stayed up until midnight. Then Shariati went to his room and everybody went to sleep. It was past ten o'clock on Sunday morning, and Shariati still had not come out of his room. They knocked on the door, but received no answer. When they entered the room, Shariati was lying in the middle of it. The actual cause of Shariati's death (the autopsy was performed after a delay) has never been ascertained, but the method of his death and its mysterious circumstances, which resemble the deaths of Takhti, Samad Behrangi, and Jalal-e-Ahmad, have eliminated the possibility that it was natural and have earned him the title of martyr."¹⁴⁷ []

The British authorities apparently found no suspicious circumstances in Shariati's death. []

Even Shariati's body was a matter for contention among his partisans. There apparently was a disagreement as to where he should be buried. One group, primarily those in Iran, wanted his body returned there; another group, those outside Iran, wanted him buried in Damascus. Among the latter were Yazdi, Sadeq Qotbzadeh, and Sadeq Tabatabai, nephew of the Lebanese Shiite leader Musa Sadr. []

The latter group argued that the government was preparing an official welcoming ceremony for Shariati's body "and in this way to defame Dr. Shariati." Europe was rejected for burial because it was the land of unbelievers, and Iraq, a natural choice, because it had a fascist government. []

But there was apparently a more important reason—to build up the prestige of Musa Sadr. A pro-Musa Sadr organization, "The Awakening of Freedom in Iran (External)," had been formed in the mid-1960s to

¹⁴⁷ Takhti was a popular wrestler and a Mossadeq partisan, Behrangi was a Marxist author, and al-Ahmad was a reformist writer. The equation is simple: they all opposed the establishment; they all died; therefore, they all were assassinated. (U)

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support Sadr's pro-Syrian position.¹⁴⁸ Sadeq Tabatabai was in charge of the organization, and Yazdi and Qotbzadeh directed it in the United States and Europe. Mostafa Chamran, a longtime resident of Lebanon, apparently was the theorist for the organization, and his formulations of Sadr's position appeared in *Payam-e-Mujahed*. According to this account, Sadr obtained permission from the Syrians to bury Shariati in Syria, he read prayers over the body and gave the eulogy. "In this way, the widespread love for Shariati was able to help to a certain extent the establishment of the prestige of Imam Sadr." []

Yazdi claimed that this was a revolutionary step "in wiping out the plots of the regime." Everyone, however, could not have been happy. Shariati's followers in Iran were completely ignored, and Mrs. Shariati arrived in London from Tehran as Shariati's body was leaving for Damascus. []

Shariati's Writings

Shariati developed many of his ideas in lectures he delivered at the Hosseiniyeh Ershad,¹⁴⁹ an institution originally encouraged by the government (and probably financed by SAVAK) as a modern alternative to the traditional mosque. It soon became, however, a center of criticism against the regime and was subsequently closed. []

Much of Shariati's reputation appears to come from his oratory. He was an inspiring speaker, and much of his published work originated as lectures and bears the mark of an oral discourse rather than a polished literary production. Adding to his popularity is the fact that he claimed a "scientific" examination of Islam, a claim that appeals to those with a modern education (ironically, provided by the Shah) for whom traditional explanations based on faith are inadequate. The reported popularity of Shariati among Khomeini's followers is interesting since Shariati espoused points of view that Khomeini himself should find distasteful,

¹⁴⁸ According to this account Sadr supported the Syrian intervention in Lebanon against the Palestinians because he wanted to change the Cairo pact, which permitted the Palestinians to operate in south Lebanon. This area was the center of Musa Sadr's influence. (U)

¹⁴⁹ A *hosseiniyeh* is typically the place primarily devoted to the performance of the martyrdom of Hosein. In small towns or villages a *hosseiniyeh* might be found more often than a mosque. None, however, were as elaborate as Ershad, a modern building with air conditioning, a public address system, an auditorium, and classrooms. (U)

mostly his animosity toward traditional Islamic scholarship. Probably the two men's views converge not in the details of each one's beliefs but in a common hatred of the West and of the monarchy and in a desire that Islam once more play a major role in the world. These are adequate for opposition to a common enemy but probably insufficient for long-term cooperation. []

Two of Shariati's longest and best known works are *Islam Shenasi (Islamology)*, which originated from a series of lectures lasting more than 30 hours, and *Tashayyu'-e Alavi va Tashayyu'-e Safavi (Alid Shiism and Safavid Shiism)*. []

In the former he attempted his own reinterpretation of Islam, using some of the concepts he learned in the course of his French education. He was moved, as others have been, to react against the persistent Westernization of Persian society. Although earlier intellectuals looked westward for Iran's salvation, he looked to a revitalized Shia Islam.

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Today the knowledge of Islam is not undertaken only as a religious duty or the pursuit of a branch of legal learning . . . but to find the cause or causes for the rise and fall of our present societies. In addition, it is a strengthening of the social spirit and the true and living yearning of a people for whose destiny we feel responsibility. (U)

He found it necessary to approach Islam "scientifically" in order to recover early Islam, a socially revolutionary movement. He argues that unlike Western societies, which did not progress until "the day that Christianity was driven from society to the interior of the church," Islam and society were one. To generalize from the Christian experience and argue that Islam impeded social development was wrong.

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He, like others, sees conspiracies. He rejected "the myth that Westerners . . . have created to the effect that . . . the Eastern mentality is incompatible with industry and with complicated administrative structures of the present and . . . must always remain only the producer of raw materials and the consumer of industrial products. . . . Perhaps it is for the purpose of establishing this point of view that they are concerned only with reviving our mystical and literary works and with creating a brisk market for them both inside and

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outside the country, while they speak little of the abundant political, technical and scientific treasures of the thousand-year history of Islam. The fate of Omar Khayyam in this age is a perfect example of the fate of our history and civilization."¹⁵⁰ (U)

For Shariati (and indeed for some other Muslims) Christianity and the West were primarily motivated in its relations with the Muslims by the desire for revenge on the world of Islam, which once defeated the Western world.

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Science placed the weapons of death into the hands of Christianity . . . who still had not forgotten . . . the conversion of the great church, the Aya Sophia, into a mosque and the change in name from Constantinople to Istanbul . . . and who had heard the clanging and determined swords of Khalid, Tariq, Salah-ed-Din Ayyubi, Muhammad the Conqueror, and the gallant champions of the Crusades . . . and whose heart ached from the rancor of defeat and the humiliation of surrender . . . attacked Islam whose limbs were cut to pieces by the sharp arrows of nationalism . . . and pressed so much on the throat of its longtime obstinate rival that its (Islam's) face became blue . . . and it became silent in painful and black strangulation. (U)

Shariati claimed that his book was the first one in Persian to try to describe Islam scientifically. Since Islam contained all that was the best in earlier civilizations and was the "transmitter of the spiritual and material experiments of ancient man to today's civilization," sociologists would find Islam a proving ground for their theories. "Within the history of Islam it is to Iran . . . that the spiritual life of Islam is indebted for everything."¹⁵¹ Without knowing Islam, one could not understand Iran. []

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¹⁵⁰ In Iran Omar Khayyam is seen as a mathematician and an astronomer and only incidentally as a rather minor poet. Western scholars' interest in Islamic religion, philosophy, and literature rather than in Islamic science arises in part from the similar emphasis that Muslims themselves gave to their heritage. There have been a considerable number of Western studies of Islamic science which Shariati may have been unaware of or ignored for the sake of his argument. For many centuries, however, the Islamic world per se has contributed little to advance science and technology which, as Shariati notes, was the result of European developments. (U)

¹⁵¹ Shariati derided the Pahlavi's emphasis on pre-Islamic Iranian civilizations as "exaggeration and extravagance" and arising from a fanaticism. (U)

He examined in detail and with references and quotations from European sociologists and historians, the bases of religion, the relation of religion to society, the position of learning in Islam, and differences between Islam and other religions. Monotheism, he asserted, was the basis of Islam. He appeared to redefine some traditional concepts, for example, *ijtihad* was freedom of scientific research. The final part of *Islamology* is a detailed study of Muhammad. []

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In *Alid Shiism and Safavid Shiism*, Shariati continued his reinterpretation of Shia Islam. In his view Shiism, as represented by its founder Ali and Ali's family, was suppressed and replaced by Safavid Shiism, an establishment religion supporting the government rather than being in continual revolt as it should be. In making his argument he dismissed nearly everything that had become typical of Shiism over the centuries, claiming in most cases that these practices resulted from imitation of Christian customs. []

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This viewpoint is central to his thesis: state and religion have been so intertwined for three centuries that only by denigrating both could he wipe the slate clean and start anew. Thus, he insisted that the Safavid opposition to the Ottoman Empire resulted from the fact that the Safavids were in collusion with the Europeans to oppose the Ottomans, who were the protectors of Islam. When the Safavids appeared, Shiism moved from the "Friday Mosque of the people" to the "Mosque of the Shah." []

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The ties of the Safavids with Christianity were obvious. Safavid missionary centers were "forced" to bring Shiism closer to Christianity. Thus Shah Abas moved the Armenian Christians of Armenian Julfa to a city near Esfahan and granted them many favors.¹⁵²

¹⁵² There seems to be no historical data to support this interpretation of Shah Abas' motives. The usual explanation is that Shah Abas wished to provide Esfahan with a skilled group of artisans. Tribal and minority groups were frequently shifted around the country by both Safavid and Qajar Shahs for their own purposes. (U)

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In a like manner the mullahs "had to" introduce a sympathetic figure into the drama of Karbala.¹⁵³ []

Shariati went on to insist that the Safavids created the position of Minister of Affairs of the Rowzehkhaneh (the institution responsible for staging the drama of Hosein). This official traveled to Europe and brought back to Iran many Christian religious customs. With the aid of pro-government religious leaders these Christian customs were grafted onto Shiism. Such customs were the *Taziyyah* (the dramatic production of the murder of Hosein), self-flagellation, music, communal mourning, the hanging of black curtains, drawing pictures of imams (pictures are forbidden in Islam), and the halo-like light surrounding the heads of imams. Nearly everything that typified popular Islam was rejected by Shariati. It is not necessary to comment in detail on his argument. The "minister of affairs of the Rowzehkhaneh" seems to appear only in Shariati. The *Taziyyah* started 500 years before the Safavids. Iran had a long pre-Islamic artistic tradition that carried into Islamic times, and the idea of depicting the imams would not seem to be strange. The halo surrounding the imam's head is a striking parallel with Christian artistic convention, but it is found also in Buddhism several centuries before Christ. []

Shariati argued that the true Shiite *ulema* were closely associated with the people and were in continuous conflict with the rulers. When they stopped opposing, they stopped being true Shiite leaders. Shariati commented that it was very hard to distinguish between Alid and Safavid Shiism since both had identical origins and the exterior form was unchanged. The Safavids cleverly managed to retain the outer form, but changed the meaning. They were adept in "making the forbidden legal and the legal forbidden." Islamic law was out of date because it dealt with matters like slaves as property but not with oil rights or the rights of the worker versus the employer, and it was shameful

¹⁵³ The drama of Karbala depicting the murder of Hosein and his followers by the troops of the caliph is the centerpiece of the Moharram celebrations. There are hundreds of versions, some of which contain anachronisms such as the presence of Sassanian warriors, Crusaders, and in one case a European who shows sympathy and support for Ali. Again, there is no indication that this was done in order to bring Safavid Shiism closer to Christianity. An easier explanation is that it was intended to show that even Christians recognized the justice of Ali's cause. (u)

that it was not Islam—the religion of freedom and liberation—that emancipated the slaves, but an American president. []

A major concern of Shariati was the split between the Sunnis and Shias, which, according to him, did not occur until the Safavids and prevented Islam from presenting a solid front to its shared foreign enemies—imperialism and Zionism. He deplored the Shiite rejection of the first three caliphs and called for unity between Sunni and Shia. Differences between the two schools were merely scholastic differences that should remain on that level and not involve the masses. []

In *Shiism, A Complete Party*, Shariati continued to expand his reinterpretation of Islam.¹⁵⁴ He commenced by defending the emotional tone of his work. He was not approaching the subject dispassionately but was dealing with 1,300 years of a nation's misfortune, the "disappearance of a freedom-granting faith, and the stupefaction of the people through force, ignorance, and poverty." []

Abu Dharr did not sit in the corner of a mosque debating the meaning of the Koran.¹⁵⁵ When Abu Dharr got into a dispute with Ka'b al-Ahbar over the meaning of a verse in the Koran, he did not dispute politely but instead struck Ka'b al-Ahbar on the head with a camel bone. Why did he do this? Shariati answered that Ka'b's interpretation would have been a conscious corrupting of the verse for the purpose of eliminating the Koran, encouraging the poverty of the people, and allowing the capitalists freedom to plunder. []

Moreover, said Shariati, "This vile man [Ka'b] was a Jew. . . . He had come and converted to Islam and donned the garb of a learned man and spiritual leader and mounted the minbar and interpreted the Koran to the profit of . . . the capitalist and to the detriment of the exploited people . . . who had turned to Islam." []

¹⁵⁴ This is the text of a lecture Shariati delivered at the Hosseiniyeh *Ershad*. (u)

¹⁵⁵ Abu Dharr, about whom Shariati wrote another book, was an early associate of Muhammad and a follower of Ali. (u)

Shariati clearly found the actions of Abu Dharr the model for conduct.¹⁵⁶ Our imams, said Shariati, have been dressed in the clothes of love, of submission to and in the pay of the Caliphs. He found this wrong, "where else do we derive our daily hope except from martyrdom." When one loved the family of Ali with his whole being, how could one remain undisturbed . . . and offer restrained criticism. []

25X1

Shariati explained that after he studied all the ideologies, revolutions, societies, renaissances, sociology, Islamology, the rise and decline of cultures, the family of Ali, the imamate and governorship, he concluded that Alid Shiism was the complete party. Alid Shiism had all the characteristics described in the Koran, it had all the requirements of an ideal party, a party of God. It was an answer to the needs of this generation of responsible intellectuals in moving the "petrified parties of societies, in directing their class struggles." []

25X1

Shariati rejected the traditional Muslim scholastic view that long study of theology, philosophy, jurisprudence, logic, ethics and all the normal subjects of a religious education should be mastered before one could move on to action. This could never be achieved. He equally rejected the views of "new intellectuals," who held that one must first prepare an ideology, choose a materialistic and secular world view. After attaining such knowledge one could, as a revolutionary intellectual, "look into society's ownership of its economic resources, and forbid class strife and man's exploitation of man." This approach was also impossible because man's knowledge was never complete. Thought and action must go hand in hand, and "we are confident that He will lay the straightest and most direct road at our feet . . . and the road will be easier. We are the group that has been entrusted with this road . . . we shall not lose hope or hesitate and not deceive ourselves and other people . . . and be just like Abu Dharr." []

25X1

Shariati gave new definitions to old concepts. The *ummat* has generally been defined as the Muslim community, the totality of all Muslims wherever they

¹⁵⁶ In this the Forqan terrorist group is following Shariati. See the section on Forqan, p. 62. (U)

are found.¹⁵⁷ *Ummat*, said Shariati, was from the Arabic root *amma*, "which means traveling, moving, setting out, a forward movement on a straight road." Thus, *ummat* was a group of people who had come together freely to follow one straight road in pursuit of a shared direction or goal. The aim of the *ummat* was "becoming perfect," not "being happy." The greatest danger was the substitution of "being" or "remaining motionless" for "becoming" or "moving." This could happen as a result of internal conflict, attack by foreigners, becoming lost, or by any other obstructing factor that could cross the path of the *ummat*, prevent it from fulfilling its goal, and deprive it of its identity. Here he seems close to the sort of esoteric interpretation of Koranic terminology that he rejected in the traditional religious scholars.¹⁵⁸ []

25X1

Shariati also gave a new definition to imam, not the 12 imams of Shia Islam nor the *imam* who was the prayer leader, but the *imam* who was the leader of the *ummat*. He was "the motor of the movement of society and the one who gives society direction . . . the person whose existence is the model for 'becoming' and whose way of acting is the guide for the nation." []

25X1

This definition of *imam* appears to be the one assumed by Khomeini's followers, for any other meaning would be blasphemy or below Khomeini's position. Khomeini himself seems neither to have encouraged nor discouraged this usage. His views, however, seem to parallel Shariati on this point for he writes that ". . . the jurisprudent and nobody else is the imam and leader of the Muslims and the person dispensing justice among them."¹⁵⁹ The present usage therefore could come as well from Khomeini as from Shariati. []

25X1

In his general attack on the "forms" of Shiism as contrasted with its content Shariati argued that the Koran supported the view that "One can break the form in order to preserve the contents, and turn it upside down." In support of this he cited the case of the

¹⁵⁷ See for example, Khadduri and Liebesny, *op. cit.*, p. 3. (U)

¹⁵⁸ Arabic etymology is often complex, if not obscure. *Amma* is movement of various kinds both concrete and abstract, as to go and to lead by example or to follow the example of someone. Other derivatives are the words for "mother" and "ignorance." (Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* ed. J. M. Cowan (Ithaca, N.Y., 1976), p. 25. The Koran uses *ummat* in the sense of "religion," (Koran 43, verse 21). A straightforward derivation would seem to be "those who follow the example" of Muhammad. (U)

¹⁵⁹ Islamic Government, p. 36

change in the direction of prayer from Jerusalem, which Muhammad first used, to Mecca, which he prescribed some years later. "In this instance," said Shariati, "the Koran broke the frame and changed the divine direction in order to free the spirit and the contents."¹⁶⁰ Shariati held that a Muslim stood in the middle of his society and held himself responsible for the leadership of the people of the East and West. He never countenanced making peace or tolerated coexistence with those who enslaved and exploited the people of the world. War was waged for the sake of liberating the oppressed. It was an economic, political, expansionist, and liberating war. []

Finally, Shariati discussed the well-known injunction to "command what is good and forbid what is evil." He castigated those who believed that this applied only to matters of personal conduct. "Today its meaning is limited to minor and superficial matters such as the chastising of a child or forbidding women to wear skirts. . . . However, Israel's transgressions against Palestine and one nation's plundering the great Muslim nation is not considered by them to be a matter of 'commanding what is good.' " []

Shariati said this principle must be considered in its original and noble sense. Every "knowledgeable guide" and legal opinion (*ijtihad*) of every period must discover and explain what was permitted and what was forbidden for that period and become a guide in implementing this precept. The responsibility of the *ummat* in this was eternal and worldwide, not parochial. []

Shariati returned to earlier arguments that true Islam was corrupted by the priests and the West. Islam was an ideology before it was changed to a collection of social traditions and rigid exterior forms. Now it was a culture composed of philosophy and sciences—the specialty of an elite—which made it resemble any other philosophy and science and eliminated its original goal to enjoin the good and forbid the evil. []

The Islamic scholar was an ideological scholar who acted as a guide. He was not a literary figure or a philosopher, but one who followed the road of the

¹⁶⁰ The impious and the infidels note that the change occurred after Muhammad had a dispute with the Jews of Medina who originally had supported him. (U)

prophets. With the book of God in one hand and the sword in the other he would face Ali's enemies. In short, Shariati concluded, Islam was an ideology not a culture. The *ummat* was an intellectual society and a religious group in motion along a shared road with an imam as a guide. The *ummat* chose its own guide-model so that it could act as a guide for other people. Under this guidance the best *ummat* will be formed and its message would be enjoining, forbidding, and believing in God. There must always be such an *ummat* among Muslims. This, concludes Shariati was a "party" in the complete sense of the term. []

Shariati's *Religion against Religion* developed another key concept in his version of Shia Islam—the idea of monotheism. It is this definition that should be kept in mind when considering the philosophy—such as it is—of the Forqan group. []

As in other of Shariati's works, he resorted to stylistic devices, the repetition of emotionally laden phrases and symbols more than to the logical development of an argument. This arose partly from the fact that most of his work originated in lectures, and his impact came less from what he said than how he said it. One might observe unkindly that the subordination of content to form that he attacked in modern Islam he raised to an art in his own work. []

Religion against Religion held that the usual view of religion opposing irreligion was false. No one in history had ever been without religion.¹⁶¹ The conflict was always between religions. He went on to limit these religions to monotheism and polytheism. Islam, properly understood, was monotheistic, but more than unity of God was involved. Recognition of the unity of God logically required the unity of man on earth, the unity of mankind, races, qualities, families, individuals, right, values, and distinctions. []

All else, Shariati insisted, was polytheism, and polytheism's goal was to support the status quo. The "fabricators" of polytheism were always among the upper classes, and the roots were economic, to assure wealth for the privileged and to deprive the poor. In polytheism "There must be several goals for various

¹⁶¹ He discounted atheism which was a recent development and was, moreover, confined to individuals, not groups or classes. (U)

25X1 areas and peoples so that several classes and races can deprive others by force.” []

There were two kinds of polytheism—the direct and open kind was the worshiping of multiple gods; the other he called hidden polytheism concealed by a veil of monotheism. It was here that his special definition of monotheism was involved. Whatever promoted the status quo, recognized classes or other distinctions in personal status was polytheism. Clearly, he included traditional Shia Islam in this and opposed it to his Alid Shiism, which was monotheistic. []

25X1 Polytheism always meant social polytheism, which involved the proliferation of races, groups, classes, and families in human society. The only time monotheism truly existed was during Muhammad’s 10-year residence at Medina, for it was only at that time that the economic and social system and the relations between individuals and classes were regulated by a belief in God and the people. []

25X1 In conclusion, after the Seal of the Prophets, that is, Muhammad, it was the *ulema*—the intellectuals—who must continue his labor. “The duty of the *ulema* is to fight with religion to establish and revivify religion, and to understand the meaning of monotheism in such a way as to know that monotheism differs from idol worship, and to be able to distinguish polytheism in its guise of monotheism.” []

25X1 Shariati basically was grappling with a perpetual theological and philosophical problem—how could God permit evil to exist? He could not reject God and become an atheist, putting all the responsibility on man, nor could he reject Islam and search for the answer in some other religion. He searched for the Islamic utopia and found it in early Islam when both Muhammad and Ali ruled according to God’s will. To recapture the utopia, he redefined key concepts and asserted that a proper understanding and application of these concepts would restore pristine Islam. Traditional Shia Islam had not been able to right the wrongs that he saw in society. Therefore, he rejected it as being a deliberate corruption of true Islam perpetrated both by Western imperialism and by indigenous rulers. True Islam was militant, continually battling with evil, and this battling was to be the major purpose of the

ummat—the Muslim community moving forward with a goal and a purpose. The leader of the *ummat* was the imam who emerged and achieved leadership by recognition of the *ummat*. Both *ummat* and *imam* are to be the models for the entire world. []

Shariati’s opposition to traditional Shia Islam was described by one sympathetic scholar:

He opposed the extreme traditionalists who spun a web around themselves, separated Islam from society into a corner of the mosque and Madraseh, and often reacted negatively to any kind of intellectual movement within society; they had covered the brilliant truths of Islam with a dark veil behind which they themselves also hid.¹⁶² (U)

Opposition to Shariati

Shariati’s teaching aroused strong reaction from some clerical circles. One attack was by Muhammad Muqimi, a religious popularizer.¹⁶³ Muqimi is especially angered at Shariati’s insistence on Sunni-Shia rapprochement:

For fourteen centuries scholars have protected the truth from the claws of the plunderers and have spent much time and effort fighting the enemy . . . they have thanked God that in the Sunni atmosphere where it was considered deserving of the highest reward to shed the blood of the Shiites, they were able to bring the light of Shiism. It is again necessary to recognize the babblings of the Sunnis in Shiite societies. (U)

Muqimi accuses Shariati of being an enemy of the Ahl-e-Bayt (the People of the House), the term used to refer to Ali and his descendants. He is especially angry that Shariati refused to correct his errors after they were pointed out to him. “I am ashamed,” says Muqimi, “to mention what one so-called scholar of religion has written . . . because he has made the blessed name of Hussayn ibn Ali a step for the

¹⁶² Iran Voice, Vol I, No. 5, 2 July 1979. This is reprinted from Hamid Algar, *On the Sociology of Islam* (Berkeley, California: The Mizan Press). This is a translation of eight of Shariati’s lectures. (U)

¹⁶³ Mohammad Muqimi, *Confusion over Some Errors of Dr. Ali Shariati*, (Tehran, 1973). Some of Muqimi’s books were published under the editorial supervision of Muhammad Beheshti of the University of Tehran Theological School. (U)

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shameful desires of imperialism ¹⁶⁴ and has taught misleading lessons to the coming generation." []

Muqimi's language is no less impassioned than Shariati's. He is incensed by Shariati's insistence that Muhammad grew up in a pagan household and insists that even some Sunni writers accept the fact that Muhammad's family was monotheistic and even Muslim. According to Muqimi, "it is proven that the ancestors of the prophet all the way back to Adam were monotheists and believers." The truth was obscured by "those who play tricks with history . . . to introduce thieves as the best guardians, the hard-hearted as the most compliant, the deadliest enemy as the best friend and, in short, to place a mask over their faces, truth and reality receded behind a dark cloud of oppressive thought and ambitions." []

Muqimi also attacks Shariati for asserting that Abu Bekr led prayers while Muhammad was still alive. Devout Shia hold that Abu Bekr, the first caliph, wrongfully obtained the caliphate, which should have gone to Ali. The story of Abu Bekr leading prayers is meant to indicate that Muhammad approved Abu Bekr as his successor. Muqimi continues attacking Shariati's errors and quoting *hadith* against him:

He places his own opinion before the people in contradiction to Shiite beliefs and has attracted a group of young people who do not have the slightest knowledge of religious matters to his side. He has accused the guardians of the holy law of being backward and being hated by the public . . . he has attacked the spiritual leaders for contradicting his errors and has told the imperialism and west- struck ¹⁶⁵ young people to attack them because they were making them prisoners of their twisted beliefs . . . the young people accepted Mr. Shariati's views and without the slightest thought, attacked the defenders of Shiism's laws, even the great Marjis who are the representatives of the Imam of the Age. []

Other religious writers, especially Sheikh Ansari, attack Shariati on much the same grounds and with the same ammunition, piling *hadith* on *hadith* to

¹⁶⁴ "Imperialism" is for Iranians of all persuasions a blanket term of contempt with little reference to its original meaning. (U)

¹⁶⁵ *Gharbzadegi*, see p. 7. (U)

refute Shariati's errors, misconceptions, and false interpretations. Ansari even compared Shariati to the detested Ahmad Kasravi at one point. []

But Shariati is not attacked only by the religious conservatives. Some Marxists do not like him either. A Marxist analysis, perhaps the only one, is found in Ali Akbar Akbari's "A Study of Some Social Questions."¹⁶⁶ Akbari's attack on Shariati has some of the same features as Muqimi's: accusations of ignorance, attacks on Shariati's contradictions, distortions, and ambiguities. For Muqimi, these shortcomings arise from Shariati's misunderstanding of Shi'ah Islam; for Akbari they arise from Shariati's misunderstanding of Marxism. Shariati's basic error, Akbari believes, is to see religion rather than economics as the locomotive of history. []

Akbari refutes the claim that the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire as Shariati had argued in Alid Shiism and Safavid Shiism was a defeat for Islam. The Ottomans were tyrants and oppressors who left no cultural heritage. It was not only the Ottomans who passed from the scene in 1924, "but all the great feudalistic, tyrannical powers in the face of the advance of the bourgeoisie." It was the bourgeoisie, not Christianity that plundered the world through merchants and capitalists, and it was capitalism, not Christianity that attacked Islam. It was the capitalism of Europe and America that attacked and plundered the nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Shariati mistakenly followed the reactionary historian Toynbee, who held that imperialist exploitation was the result of religious beliefs and nonscientific reasons. Shariati's errors will only aid imperialism and reaction by misleading his readers and give them an incorrect knowledge of colonialism and its method of advance. []

Shariati also misunderstood the matter of social classes, which originated in economic not religious conditions. The landlord-peasant struggle will not disappear by the weakening of the landlords' belief in their own system, as Shariati believed. The elimination of the capitalist class can only be accomplished by

¹⁶⁶ Chapkhane-ye-Tabish (Tehran, 1349 (1970)) 112 pages. (U)

eliminating the capitalist system. Akbari assaults Shariati at every turn for his ignorance of the true, that is, Marxist, reason for social classes, poverty, corruption, and crime. []

Although the debate between Shariati and his opponents involves interpretations of history and religion, these are more than sterile academic exercises. Both sides are arguing political action, and at least some who follow Shariati are invoking his ideas to support terrorism. []

Forqan and Ali Shariati

The terrorist group calling itself Forqan ¹⁶⁷ came to prominence in early 1979 when it claimed responsibility for the assassination of Major General Qarani, a former Chief of Staff, and Ayatollah Motahari, a professor at the University of Tehran Theological School who was close to Khomeini. It may go back, however, as far as early 1977. []

Forqan has been reported as representing several different groups—the Fedayan-e-Islam; a group of confused, aimless students; and “a group organized by SAVAK more than two years ago with the specific purpose of instigating ideological friction within the Islamic revolutionary movement.” ¹⁶⁸ []

Another view is that Forqan represents the followers of Shariati who are trying to realize in practice what Shariati preached. At least one of Shariati's followers denounces this identification. “Shariati,” he wrote, “always perceived the Iranian clerics as potential revolutionary leaders not only in destroying the monarchy, but also in constructing a new sociopolitical

order.” ¹⁶⁹ “Last January,” he continued, “in a street demonstration in Tehran I saw an eight- to ten-year-old boy distributing a Forqan leaflet containing some distorted quotations from Shariati's writings. . . .

Forqan is completely unknown to Iranians, no one has ever met a member of the organization. . . . ¹⁷⁰ Many Iranians are convinced that these counterrevolutionary actions are designed and directed by the CIA/Israeli agents.”

One of the fullest accounts was provided by an Iranian newspaper. ¹⁷¹ Claiming to possess Forqan documents, the newspaper described what it considered to be basic beliefs of Forqan:

- Islam. It emphasizes monotheism, ¹⁷² the Koran, and its interpretation.
- Human beings are divine, and a fighter should recognize God. Until the poor inherit the earth, humans should emphasize monotheism and “take up arms in anger.”
- Martyrdom. “The martyr evaluates all of the directions, ebbs and tides, and society's ups and downs with the principles of Koranic ideology.” The martyrs of the Mujahedin-e-Khalq and Shariati are especially praised.
- Alid Shiism.
- Leadership is by “distinguished prophets” and “martyrs from the poor.” The leaders . . . set the direction for saving the poor, the people, the imamate and their heredity.
- Forqan is “Islam without clergy.” It accuses the clergy of dictatorship, being reactionary, deviating from monotheism, defending the interests of land-owners and capitalists, and “Akhundist dictatorship.”

¹⁶⁷ The meaning of *forqan* in the Koran is severalfold. As indicated on p. 40, it has the meaning of distinguishing truth from falsehood. It also occurs in reference to one of Muhammad's battles—“the day of distinction,” that is, between Muhammad and the unbelievers of Mecca. Some commentators take this in a more general sense and interpret *forqan* as a victory over unbelievers. This is probably the meaning intended by the group calling itself Forqan. (See J. Penrice, *A Dictionary and Glossary of the Koran* (London: 1873), pp. 109-110; R. E. Bell, *Introduction to the Koran* (1953), p. 136f; *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edition, Vol. 2, pp. 949-950. (u))

¹⁶⁸ Mansur Farhang, “A Rebuttal,” *Iran Voice*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 2 July 1979, p. 3. (u)

¹⁶⁹ Farhang, *loc.cit.* The Shariati material that has been examined does not support Farhang. What Shariati may have said privately is unknown. It is true that a clergy that conformed to Shariati's view of what the clergy should be would fulfill a revolutionary role. Shariati, however, did not seem to have been successful in finding clergy that fit his model unless he thought Khomeini filled the bill. Farhang says that Shariati “admired Khomeini both as a theologian and as a leader of the Iranian Islamic revolution.” One wonders how Shariati would view the Islamic revolution as implemented by Khomeini. (u)

¹⁷⁰ Some members were reported arrested, but nothing more has been heard of them. (u)

¹⁷¹ *Ayandegan*, 10 May 1979, p.14. This paper was subsequently suppressed. (u)

¹⁷² See p. 59 for Shariati's definition of monotheism. (u)

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- Forqan supports the poor and believes that the looting of the poor has been the constant procedure of all systems . . . colonialists and nonbelievers in monotheism.
- Fighting is an inseparable part of mankind and is essential in expressing the identity of the poor. "Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed able to give them victory." (Koran XXII:39) The main characteristic of believers is that "socially and from God's nature they are constantly in bloody fighting with gods of history and the masters of the world."
- Forqan despises "political fighting," for example, meetings and strikes [redacted]

Forqan appears opposed to almost everyone and everything—Russia, China, the United States, Afghanistan, both of Daoud and Taraki, colonialists east and west, Marxists, and the Tudeh party—a branch of SAVAK.¹⁷³ Zionism, Sadat, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Lebanese Phalange, and Japan are all on Forqan's enemies' list. In addition to the poor, Forqan supports the Eritrean Muslims' Movement, Arafat's PLO, Islamic and non-Islamic liberation movements, and the "Sahara" [sic] movement [redacted]

Finally, Forqan attacks Bazargan and Motahari for "plotting against the ideas and writings of Shariati." A joint statement of Bazargan and Motahari on 14 December 1977 in which they asked for unity against the Shah is castigated as suggesting that Shariati had been in error on Islamic issues. The joint statement, insists Forqan, "was made to change the aims of the martyrs and the revolutionary culture." After Motahari's assassination he was accused of "turning his back on the unification movement of Iran's poor Muslims during Satan's era," and of taking sides against Shariati. He is also accused of creating the term "materialist hypocrite" in order to isolate the Muslims who follow monotheism. [redacted]

¹⁷³ This, at least, is not far wrong. In the 1960s most "Tudeh" organizations in Iran were run by or penetrated by SAVAK. Tudeh abroad, however, was not although even there SAVAK had penetrations. (u)

Qarani, who was later assassinated, was a follower of Ayatollah Milani, and Milani was an opponent of Shariati. Shariati also had attacked Milani, whom he accused of creating conflicts among Muslims. [redacted]

Shariati's openly identified followers reject the idea that Forqan represents his philosophy. It is not at all unlikely, however, that less educated, unsophisticated readers of Shariati could have seized on some of his ideas to support their course of action. Forqan might be an offshoot of the Mujahidin-e-Khalq, for the ideas expressed would seem to be in accord with the Mujahidin. Finally, Forqan could be the tool of a faction in the present religious/political maneuvering. The Fedayan-e-Islam of the 1940s and 1950s was manipulated and used by several different factions against its enemies.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Some unsubstantiated reporting at the time suggested that the Shah had used the Fedayan to eliminate Prime Minister Razmara. (u)

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Part III: Major Shia Leaders Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, indisputedly the dominant figure in Iran today, has had more than his share of luck in reaching that position. When he began his campaign against the Shah in 1963 he could not have anticipated the events that gave him the opportunity to press this campaign to a successful conclusion. Khomeini's expulsion from Iraq in October 1978 was a key occurrence. That development gave Khomeini and his followers the opportunity to launch the kind of campaign from Paris that they could not have attempted from Iraq. []

The origin of Khomeini's opposition to the Shah and his government appears to have been based entirely on Khomeini's interpretation of religious principles. No early personal experience can be found that might have influenced him. This appeal to religion gives him a much wider constituency than that of the nationalists whose three decades of opposition has been based on secular principles. The fundamentalist interpretation of Shia Islam which Khomeini espouses puts him in opposition to more liberal trends, but the vehemence and uncompromising nature of his positions have intimidated other clerics who fear, not without cause, that open opposition to Khomeini could be calamitous for them. []

Ruhollah Khomeini was born in the village of Khomeyn in the province of Esfahan north of Golpayegan around 1900.¹⁷⁵ His father was Seyed Mustafa al-Shahid al-Khomeini, and his grandfather was surnamed al-Hindi, reflecting his origin in Kashmir. His father bore the title Hojjat al-Islam, an honorific suggesting something more than a mullah

¹⁷⁵ Most of this biography is from Muhammad Razi, *Asar al-Hujjah* (The Signs of the Twelfth Imam). The more recent *Ganjineh-ye-Daneshmandan* does not include Khomeini, possibly because by 1972 Khomeini was anathema to the Government of Iran and the book might have been banned. Additional information is from an interview with his brother, Morteza, in *Tehran Journal*, 16 January 1979, p. 4. (U)

Figure 14

Highlights in life of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

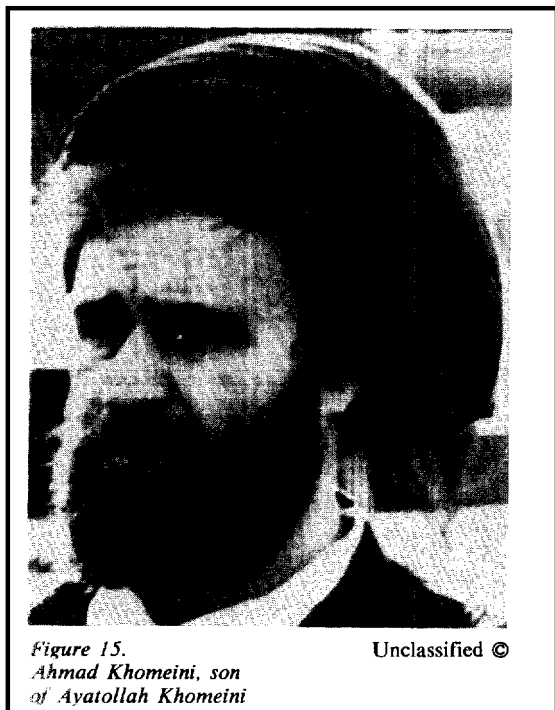
About 1900	Born in Khomeyn.
1916	Goes to Arak for theological education.
1921	Follows his teacher Haeri-Yazdi to Qom.
1921-38	Studies in Qom.
1938-48	Teaches at Qom.
1961	Death of Ayatollah Borujerdi makes Khomeini one of several contenders for Shiite leadership.
4 June 1963	Arrested after antigovernment sermon.
April 1964	Released from house arrest.
October 1964	Rearrested and exiled to Turkey after attacking Status of Forces Bill.
October 1978	Expelled from Iraq. Goes to Paris after being refused entry to Kuwait.
1 February 1979	Returns to Iran.

The above information is Unclassified.

but not as grand as an ayatollah.¹⁷⁶ The family claims descent from Muhammad. Ruhollah was the youngest of six children who were orphaned when Ruhollah was only 9 months old. His mother and aunt died when he was 15 and he went to live with his older brother. The brother, now 85 years old is, Hojjat al-Islam Seyed Morteza Pasandideh, who was released from internal exile in September 1978 and has been a constant companion of his younger brother ever since. Khomeini had two sons. Mostafa died a few years ago in An Najaf in what are now called "mysterious circumstances." He died of a heart attack, but his death is said to have had a profoundly unsettling effect on

¹⁷⁶ The assertion (e.g. in Paul Balta and Claudine Rulleau, *L'Iran Insurge* (Paris 1979), p. 156), that he is from a long established line of ayatollahs is possible but unsubstantiated. His father was not so designated, and his maternal grandfather Imam Mirza Ahmad is not mentioned in the *Ganjineh*, an omission that would be unusual. (U)

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Khomeini who is convinced his son was killed by the government. A second son, Ahmad, is married to the niece of the missing Lebanese Shiite leader, Musa Sadr. [redacted]

Khomeini received his early training from a local clergyman. After mastering the *Muqaddimat*—the elements of religious knowledge—he went to Arak 40 miles to the north. Arak, when Khomeini arrived in 1916, was about a century old. Its population was perhaps 15,000—including several Jewish families—and it would be more than a decade before the railroad would come through. This prosperous city was well known for its carpet manufacturing, but its religious renown was derived from the presence there of Ayatollah Abdol Karim Haeri-Yazdi (d. 1937), one of the most eminent religious figures of his day.¹⁷⁷ Khomeini followed Haeri-Yazdi when the latter

¹⁷⁷ Haeri-Yazdi attempted to remain uninvolved in politics, a difficult job for a lifetime that spanned both the Constitutional Revolution and the rise of Reza Shah. Haeri moved from An Najaf to Arak in 1900, left Arak in 1906 when the religious leaders got involved in the Constitutional Revolution, and returned to An Najaf. When the An Najaf scholars also became involved, he moved to Karbala. In 1913 he returned to Arak and stayed there until 1921 when he went to Qom, where he reestablished the Qom Circle for Religious Studies (Howzeh-ye-Elmiyyah-ye Qom). He joined other clergymen in 1926 in opposing Reza Khan's attempt to establish a republic. (U)

moved to Qom in 1921. He continued to study *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *usul* (the science of proofs that lead to the establishment of legal standards) with Haeri-Yazdi, who was recognized as an outstanding authority. Khomeini also studied ethics, philosophy, and *irfan* (esoteric knowledge). From 1938 to 1948 he taught in Qom, specializing in ethics. Later he taught courses in principles of Islamic taxation. He is the author of at least 24 works. [redacted]

How and why Khomeini turned into such an intractable opponent of the Shah remains undetermined. He is said to have coauthored an anti-Pahlavi book in 1944 or 1945 after the exile of Reza Shah, but he was known primarily as a scholar.¹⁷⁸ He was well enough connected in the Qom religious establishment, however, to be entrusted by Ayatollah Borujerdi, recognized leader of the Shiites at the time, with responsibility for the affairs of religious students when Borujerdi died in 1961. According to his brother, Ruhollah's "first serious encounter with the regime was sparked by the Shah's plan to launch the land reform in 1963." [redacted]

From February-March of 1963, when the Shah pushed through parliament a law enfranchising women and permitting them to be elected to Parliament, until June, there was a buildup of antiregime activity by the mullahs fronted by Khomeini. According to one account he was selected by others in the clergy who believed they could control him and manipulate his operations. [redacted]

Khomeini's activities culminated in his arrest in Qom by SAVAK on the morning of 5 June 1963, which fell in the religious mourning month of *Moharram*. Widespread rioting occurred immediately in Tehran and Shiraz with high casualties. Khomeini remained in prison and later under house arrest until early April 1964. The issue was whether Khomeini would agree to abstain from political activities if released. He was released but immediately resumed his antigovernment sermons, concentrating on themes such as excessive Jewish and Bahai influence, unconstitutionality, cor-

¹⁷⁸ This book cannot be identified. It might, however, be a 1941 book, *The Keys of Spirituality* (Qom, 1941), which was anti-Reza Shah. (Morteza Katabi and Jean Leon, "The March towards the Islamic Republic of Iran—Society and Religion according to Imam Khomeini," in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, April 1979, trans. in JPRS 073353, 1 May 79, p. 81). This work, however, cannot be identified among the 24 books known to be written by Khomeini. (U)

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ruption, the danger of foreign influence, and the anti-Muslim character of the Iranian Government. The government immediately warned him that if he continued, he would be arrested. He lapsed into silence. [REDACTED]

On Punishment

If the punitive law of Islam is applied for only one year, all injustice and immorality can be eliminated. The hand of the thief must be cut off, the killer killed, the adulterer and adulteress beaten. "Humanitarian" scruples are more childish. [REDACTED]

On Medicine

The rulers have caused the people to forget traditional medicine in order to encourage the youth to study European medicine. Such diseases as typhus and typhoid can only be cured by traditional indigenous remedies. Western doctors and surgeons are ignorant about the cures that are successfully used in the Iranian bazaars.¹⁸⁰ [REDACTED]

Khomeini's views on daily life and conduct are very traditional and prescribe in detail what is forbidden and what is permitted. He prescribes procedures for everything from personal health to prayer. Rules regarding the treatment and conduct of women are detailed as are finances and taxes. None of these rules is peculiar to Khomeini. They are traditional. Islamic observance or portions, at least, have been absorbed into everyday life by millions of Iranians. For the first time in generations, however, the clergy is in a position to enforce all of these rules as law rather than as recommended observances. [REDACTED]

Khomeini, like Shariati, is more an advocate of pan-Islam than of sectarian Shia Islam, although they probably arrived at their positions by different roads. Many devout Iranians will be troubled—if not incensed—by this because the Sunni-Shia split is a very real and emotional issue. Without this difference an essential aspect of their identity as Shias would disappear, and they would be no different from the Arabs, who generally are not held in high regard. [REDACTED]

Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari

Kazem Shariatmadari is generally recognized as the most important clergyman in Iran after Ayatollah Khomeini. His main interest seems to be in promoting a more widespread interest in and knowledge of Islam both at home and abroad. [REDACTED]

¹⁸⁰ See appendix B for similar views. (U)

Khomeini's subsequent activities until his return to Iran in 1979 have been covered earlier in this paper.¹⁷⁹ [REDACTED]

A detailed analysis of Khomeini's thought is not yet possible. His public statements are noted for their lack of substance except insofar as he is proclaiming punishment for malefactors. Aside from *Islamic Government*, a French translation of excerpts from three of Khomeini's books is available. A few of Khomeini's observations taken from this book may help in understanding the Ayatollah. [REDACTED]

On War

Holy War (jihad), he says, means the conquest of non-Muslim territory. It can be declared after the formation of an Islamic government and on the order of the imam. All Muslim males have the duty to participate in the jihad whose purpose is to establish Koranic law throughout the earth. The whole world knows that the universal supremacy of Islam is quite different from the hegemony of other conquerors. Such a war under the leadership of the imam is distinguished from unjust and tyrannical wars by the principles of Islam. [REDACTED]

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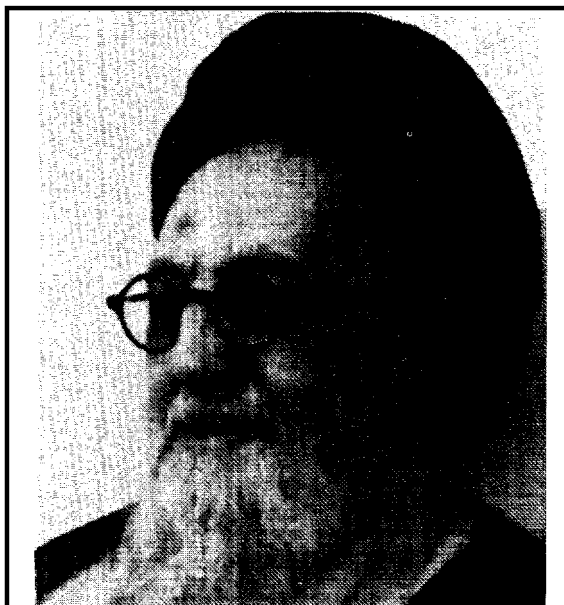


Figure 16.
Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari

Unclassified ©

Kazem Shariatmadari¹⁸¹ was born in Tabriz in 1904, although his family was originally from Borujerd. He traces his genealogy to the fourth imam (seventh to eighth centuries). He was the son of Sayyid Mohammad Alavi al-Aftasa, and his grandfather was Sayyid Hajj Mohammad Borujerdi, a prominent figure in Borujerd in the 19th century. The 12th-century tomb of one of his ancestors is a landmark in Borujerd. [REDACTED]

Shariatmadari studied under two prominent ayatollahs in Tabriz until 1924 when, at age 20, he moved to Qom, which was just beginning to flourish as a religious center under Ayatollah Abdol Karim Haeri-Yazdi, with whom Khomeini also studied. It is likely that Khomeini and Shariatmadari became acquainted at this time. During the next 25 years he continued his studies, traveling twice to An Najaf to study with Ayatollah Esfahani, who was recognized as the head of all the Shias from 1920 to 1945, and Ayatollah Naini, a supporter of the constitution in 1906. Both had also been active in Iraq against British authorities there, and both had favored Reza Khan (later Reza Shah) over the last of the Qajar Shahs and opposed the establishment of a republic at the time. [REDACTED]

¹⁸¹ Most of this data, unless noted otherwise, is from Muhammad Razi, *Ganjineh-ye Daneshmandan* (Tehran 1974). (U)

He returned (time unspecified) to Tabriz at the invitation of the religious leaders there and taught *fiqh* until 1949 when he went to Qom, again at the request of Tabrizi theologians living in Qom, to teach *fiqh* and *usul*. [REDACTED]

Shariatmadari and the late Ayatollah Borujerdi, at that time the recognized leader of the Shia community (*marja-e-taqlid*), became close, and when the latter died in 1960, Shariatmadari took over the task of administering the finances of the Qom religious complex. Shariatmadari was the overwhelming choice of the Azerbaijani Shites to succeed Borujerdi, and a delegation of Tabriz merchants and religious leaders went to Qom to plead his case. The supporters of the Najafi-based Ayatollah Hakim prevailed, however—perhaps because of Shariatmadari's inclination to compromise with the government when possible, and the belief that a leader in Iraq would be less susceptible to pressure from the Iranian Government. Shariatmadari continues teaching but also finances religious schools in other cities. The Dar al-Tabligh Islami (Foundation for the Propagation of Islam), which he founded, occupies much of his time. [REDACTED]

Shariatmadari's eminence is based on these activities rather than his learning for he seems to have published little. A group of his students have, however, published his lectures. His views were also expressed in a series of articles in the journal published by the Dar al-Tabligh, and a long speech that he made at the opening of the Dar al-Tabligh has also been published. Shariatmadari begins this speech by quoting the tradition "On the day of judgment . . . the ink of the scholars will outweigh the blood of the martyrs." [REDACTED]

He then urges jihad, that is, a holy war, but, he said,

before everything else there is a jihad of learning, the pen and the tongue. Of course, there are other meanings of jihad, but the rational, intellectual, literary, and oral jihads take precedence over them.

He compares unfavorably Muslim efforts to propagate the faith with Christian and Jewish propaganda. "Even worse," he says, "than those two is the 'misguiding group' that is the least worthy of the

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religious groups of the world.”¹⁸² Shariatmadari is more moderate in his attitude toward church-state relations than is Khomeini. Many of his statements on the subject, however, seem to have been forced by Khomeini’s actions, and are not completely consistent.

that we resist in a more temperate manner because of the narrow area in which we were moving both politically and at the level of information, whereas the freedom that Khomeini had put him into a better offensive position than ours.”

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The reporter pressed Shariatmadari, asking if his stand in the fall of 1978 for implementation of the 1906 constitution with the retention of the Shah was not a fundamental difference with Khomeini. Shariat-

madari commented that “the Shah’s regime was present and was not a subject of discussion. The subject of discussion between us and the Shah was the disregarded portions of the constitution.” He went on to remark that if the constitution had been implemented, the Shah’s oppressive role would have been ended. The reporter continued to press, “Can I understand from this that you would have accepted the Shah’s stay had he implemented the constitution?” But Shariatmadari remained evasive, “During the phase in which we were demanding the constitution, the Shah’s throne was not the subject of discussion. Khomeini himself demanded that the Shah implement the constitution years ago.”¹⁸³ (U)

Ayatollah Abol Qassem Khoi

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Ayatollah Abol Qassem Khoi, although an Iranian by birth, has spent nearly his whole life at the Shiite religious center in An Najaf, Iraq. He is a traditional scholar of great learning and influence, but appears to be apolitical, a position that may be required as much by his circumstances as by his personal attitude.

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Shariatmadari was in favor of the Shah’s remaining on the throne until the overwhelming power of Khomeini made it obvious that anyone who had any relationship with the Shah had to be eliminated. He was very reluctant to push for any confrontation with security forces which would result in fatalities, precisely the opposite of what Khomeini was seeking.

Shariatmadari is sensitive to the fact that he was rather late to express his total opposition to the Shah. In the course of an interview with a Kuwaiti newspaper reporter he was asked if he had thought that moderation was the path to victory over the Shah. Shariatmadari answered that “conditions required

In the opinion of his biographer,¹⁸⁴ Ayatollah Khoi is now the paramount religious leader of the Shia. He heads the Howzeh-ye-Elmiyyah Najaf (the Najaf Circle for Religious Studies), the most important of the Shiite theological schools. The Circle was seriously affected by the 1970 expulsion from Iraq of 100,000 Iranians—most of them gathered around the Shiite holy places—as part of the anti-Iranian campaign of the Iraqi Government. Khoi was so affected by this that he fell ill and had to be treated in London. “He

¹⁸³ *Al-Watan* (Kuwait), 25 May 1979. Translated in JPRS 73752, Translations on the Near East and North Africa, No. 1987, 25 June 1979, pp. 26-27. (U)

¹⁸⁴ Razi, *Ganjineh-ye-Daneshmandan*. (U)

¹⁸² The Shiite *ulema* apparently will not refer to the Bahais as such but only as the *fergeh-ye zalleh*, the “misguiding group.” (U)

25X1 returned to Najaf to save the thousand-year-old Howzeh and now resides there with a limited number of Iranians." []

25X1 Khoi was born in the city of the same name in 1899. His father was Haj Ali Akbar Musavi, a well-known clergyman of Mashhad who was leader of the congregation at Gowhar Shad Mosque located adjacent to the Shrine of the Imam Reza. His known lineage traces back no further. Khoi probably got his initial training from his father, and in 1921 both of them went to An Najaf, where Khoi studied with Ayatollahs Naini and Esfahani as had Shariatmadari. In the words of his biographer "he snatched the ball of precedence from all the other students" and collected and published the lectures of his teacher Naini. []

25X1 Two dreams relating to Ayatollah Khoi are recorded. His father reported that before his son's birth a very devout student had come to him saying that Imam Ali had appeared to him in a dream saying that the child when born should be called Abol Qassem. Khoi's biographer dreamt that the last imam had appeared and mentioned Khoi by name.¹⁸⁵ []

25X1 ¹⁸⁵ Dreams are often related in connection with the lives of religious figures as well as others. Ali said that the knowledge of dreams and the ability to interpret them and to predict the future resided "in him and his family." Dream interpretation is often found in religious literature. In this connection the alleged dream of Ayatollah Shirazi in December 1978, in which Ali chastised Khomeini for his opposition to the Shah, would be believable to many. The Shah's claim that Ali appeared to him several times in dreams is very much in the Iranian tradition. (U)

A measure of the respect in which he was held as long ago as 1948 was the ceremony with which he was received during a trip to Iran in that year. Visiting and teaching at Qom, Tehran, and Mashhad, he was received by notables outside each city and escorted in—a procedure reserved for distinguished visitors in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but which had nearly fallen into disuse by 1948. []

At the age of 79 Ayatollah Khoi may not have many more years as head of the Shiites. On his death both Khomeini and Shariatmadari will be aspirants for this post, providing either still survives. []

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Appendix A

The Meaning of *Moharram*

On 1 October 680, which was the first day of the month of *Moharram* and 46 years after the death of Muhammad, two Arab Muslim armies faced each other on the west bank of the Euphrates River at the plain called Karbala south of present-day Baghdad. The two forces were poorly matched. On one side were 4,000 men of the forces of Yazid, Caliph of Islam in Damascus, and on the other some 200 followers (in Arabic, Shia) of Hosein, grandson of Muhammad, who disputed Yazid's claim to be caliph and considered himself the rightful successor of the Prophet. []

Hosein was surrounded, and for 10 days occasional skirmishes alternated with periods of negotiation. On the 10th day Yazid's forces opened an all-out attack, and the battle went on until late in the afternoon. Finally, with all his followers dead, Hosein dashed into the midst of his enemies. The final blow was dealt by Shimar, according to Shia tradition, which also records that Hosein's body bore 23 spear wounds and 34 from swords. Hosein's head was cut off, and his body trampled in the dust by Yazid's horsemen. The Shias believe that the head that was initially sent to Yazid, subsequently was returned to Karbala and is buried there in Hosein's shrine. []

This event—which the Shiites call the Tragedy at Karbala—is at the center of the *Moharram* mourning period. For centuries the yearly reenactment of the death of Hosein at the hands of Yazid (although he was not present) and Shimar has aroused intense emotion among all classes throughout the country. The occasion has often been used to voice veiled political comment, and a sermon by Ayatollah Khomeini in which he explicitly compared the Shah to the tyrant Yazid was a major factor in the Ayatollah's exile. []

The Ceremonies

The mourning ceremonies occur in several forms: recitations of the story of Hosein in the mosque combined with a sermon, recitations in private homes, dramatic presentations in public, and parades. Whatever the form, the intention is always the same—to incite the participants to a frenzy of weeping and

wailing through flagellations and beatings. If these tears are mingled with blood, the participants gain even greater merit. []

In Tehran, for example, as many as 3,000 worshippers, mostly men, may be gathered in a large bazaar mosque. Around the mosque for many blocks crowds gather so tightly that movement is barely possible. Most are paraders who are just forming or who have ended a parade at the mosque. []

Inside the mosque several mullahs in succession give sermons on the Hosein theme. As each speaker reaches the climax of the story, weeping and wailing increases. Finally, the main speaker begins. He starts with a sermon dwelling on the virtues and suffering of the family of Ali and then begins the chanting of the Hosein narrative. Again, as the story reaches its climax—the decapitation of Hosein—the weeping and groaning increases in volume, and many begin to pound their foreheads and beat their chests. Finally, the sermon ends, and the crowd becomes calm. Some may remain at the mosque all day listening to repetitions of the narrative, others may join one of the many parades that are being held, and still others may go to other mosques or private homes for further commemoration ceremonies. []

The public parades that take place throughout the first 10 days of *Moharram* are basically the same whether they occur in Tehran with thousands of participants or in a small village with only a dozen. []

The parades are arranged by a group specifically organized for that purpose and usually represent a district, a neighborhood, or the members of a mosque. Often this group—called a *dasteh*—meets year round, not only to plan for the ceremonies but also as a social-religious group to study the Koran, listen to recitations of the Hosein story, and discuss politics. A parade is often preceded by a meal sponsored by someone in the district to which the members of the *dasteh*, prominent people, and the poor are invited. After the meal the

leader of the *dasteh* begins chanting a lament in verse accompanied by rhythmical beating of the chest. The parade then moves outside and through the streets, preceded and followed by black banners and stopping at each mosque or shrine in the area. This may go on all day and long into the night. []

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On *Ashura*, the 10th day of *Moharram* and the day on which Hosein and his family were murdered, the major ceremonies take place. The parades begin to form at sunrise. The breastbeating resumes, and the parades move through the streets to a central square where several *dastehs* may be gathered. All join in a final breastbeating, and then a mullah seated on a raised platform recites the Hosein story. Following this the symbols are brought out—black and green standards and the centerpiece, the *nakhl*. This type of sedan chair is so large that 40 or 50 men may be required to carry it on their shoulders. It represents the vehicle in which Hosein and his relatives were carried to the final battle at Karbala. The bearers enter the square at a trot, turning themselves around twice as they enter. They circle the assembled *dastehs* three times and then settle down on the fringes of the crowd. The combined *dastehs* form large circles, and under the leadership of a chanter in the center breastbeating resumes and the whole circle moves one step to the right with each beat. Finally at a drum signal this part of the ceremony ends, and the depiction on stage of the tragedy at Karbala begins. []

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The drama, which may go on for several hours, recounts a story that is well-known to all those watching, but which never fails to excite the most intense emotion. Although *Ashura* is the peak of the mourning period, such performances, as well as other observances, continue for the whole month and may be repeated 40 days after *Ashura* as well. []

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Appendix B

The Fedayan-e-Islam

The Fedayan-e-Islam (the Devotees of Islam), which flourished in the decade from 1945-55, was the prototype of today's religiously oriented terrorist organizations—Forqan and the Mujahidin-e-Khalq. []

The Fedayan was probably founded in 1945 by Mojtaba Mirlohi, who took the name Navab Safavi. It became the most violent element associated with Muhammad Mossadeq's National Front, although it eventually turned against him. The size of the organization was always in dispute, but probably consisted of no more than 50 or 60 hard-core members, with 25,000 to 30,000 more who could be expected to follow the Fedayan's lead. The Fedayan was responsible for at least three assassinations—including a prime minister and a former prime minister—and three unsuccessful attempts including those against the Shah and another prime minister. The killing of Prime Minister Mansur in 1965 may have been the work of a religious organization influenced by the earlier Fedayan. []

The Leaders

Mojtaba Mirlohi was born in Tehran in 1923. He was from a fanatically religious family claiming descent from the Prophet. He went to elementary school in Tehran and then to a German vocational school for three years. When his father died in 1938, Mojtaba was put under the guardianship of his uncle, from whom he received a religious education. He worked for a short time for the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company but quit and went to Iraq. When he returned a few months later, he was wearing clerical robes. In 1940 he married a girl from a middle-class religious family of Mashhad. []

Although Mirlohi/Safavi's religious knowledge was not great, he was a spellbinding speaker whose ability to attract a following from among the uneducated masses was phenomenal. He showed complete devotion to his cause and his willingness to die for that cause, was an important ingredient in his attraction. Safavi seems to have been solely responsible for planning the Fedayan's activities and assassinations, although he

had two capable lieutenants, Abdul Hosein and Seyed Muhammad Vahedi from Kermanshah. Safavi, Vahedi, and one other were executed in 1955. []

Fedayan Activities

The Fedayan cut its assassination teeth on Ahmad Kasravi, (see page 6). When Safavi and Hosein Imami, who were believed responsible for the assassination, were brought to trial, not a single witness could be found, although the deed had occurred in Kasravi's crowded office at the Ministry of Justice. The courtroom was packed with mullahs and religious fanatics. The defendants were dismissed for lack of evidence.¹⁸⁶ []

The next move was nearly three years later, in early 1949, when an attempt was made on the Shah's life. Although the motivation is still unclear, the attacker carried a press card of the *Parcham-e-Islam*, the Fedayan newspaper. He also was a fanatic Tudeh Party member, according to his wife. The government used this as an excuse to outlaw the Tudeh. Which organization was actually responsible remains an open question. []

Court Minister Hajir was killed in November 1949. A year and a half earlier Hajir, then a candidate for Prime Minister, had been violently opposed by Ayatollah Kashani. An anti-Hajir demonstration by Kashani's followers turned violent. As the demonstrators marched on the *majlis*, they were met by troops who fired on them, wounding about 70. According to an American Embassy report:

Because the crowd on whom the police fired had been led by a mullah carrying the Koran, the antagonism of the mullahs to Hajir has become even more violent than before. The two *majlis* sessions which he has attended since he presented his program have been broken up in disorder due to insults hurled at the

¹⁸⁶ The presiding judge said that he had fainted and did not know what had taken place. (U)

Prime Minister from the spectators' gallery, the press gallery, and even from the parliamentary opposition itself. Early in the week five deputies signed an indictment against Hajir charging him with sacrilege against the Koran. . . []

A month later Deputy Prime Minister Hosein Fatemi, a close friend of Mossadeq's, was shot and seriously wounded by a youthful Fedayan member.¹⁸⁷ The government once more cracked down, arresting a large number of members who remained jailed for varying lengths of time. []

The sacrilege was revenged the next year when Hosein Imami—previously acquitted in the Kasravi slaying—shot the Minister as the latter was attending religious services at Sepahsalar Mosque. It was the last day of *Moharram*. This time, however, Imami was tried and executed. The execution was held secretly to avoid more demonstrations. Imami confessed that he had planned to kill several other officials. []

The *majlis* had heeded the Fedayan warning and in August unanimously adopted a bill stipulating that "if Khalil Tahmasebi is proven to be the killer of Razmara, he will be pardoned and liberated by stipulations of this bill." Three months later Tahmasebi was released. He promptly was received by both Mossadeq and Kashani and visited Safavi, who was still in prison. []

A year and a half later the Fedayan played a key role in bringing Mossadeq to power. General Ali Razmara, appointed Prime Minister in June 1950, opposed the proposal for oil nationalization that was being pushed in the *majlis* by Tehran deputy Mohammad Mossadeq and his National Front coalition. Razmara's objections were on economic grounds, but the Fedayan felt that Razmara was a tool of the British and was trying to sell the country to foreigners. In March 1951 he was killed by Fedayan member Khalil Tahmasebi. A month later the Shah appointed Mossadeq Prime Minister. The new Prime Minister and Safavi soon had a falling out. Safavi was angry because Mossadeq had not obtained the release from prison of the assassin. The Fedayan threatened to kill both Mossadeq and Ayatollah Kashani, who was then Mossadeq's chief lieutenant. Mossadeq hid in the *majlis*, where he remained until Safavi was arrested. []

Safavi was released a short time afterwards. Little was heard of the Fedayan for a couple of years. The Shah ousted Mossadeq in August 1953, and opposition elements of all stripes were suppressed. []

The last gasp of Safavi's Fedayan was in November 1955 when an assassin tried to kill Prime Minister Hosein Ala. This time Safavi, his lieutenants, the Vahedi brothers, and Tahmasebi, who had been acting as a Koran-chanter in a Mashhad mosque, were all executed. The words of one scholar can serve as their epitaph:

They all faced their death with victorious smiles on their faces, certain that they were commissioned by God and joining him and all the faithful in paradise as a reward for the service they had rendered to Islam and Iran.¹⁸⁸ []

Safavi remained in jail for the next six months. In January 1952 a group of Fedayan members entered the prison where he was being held and refused to leave without him. They issued a proclamation threatening that "our reaction will be so violent that it will surprise the whole world." They also threatened the new parliament that "the same force will be used and will plunge the 17th *majlis* in blood." The Fedayan confidently predicted that "soon we shall assume power, and the country will be ruled by Moslems." []

The Fedayan Program

Navab Safavi would be happy in today's Iran. The programs of Khomeini and his followers are nearly identical with those of the Fedayan. A few extracts from the Fedayan's program, as summarized by a

¹⁸⁷ A year and a half later Fatemi, who had been Mossadeq's Foreign Minister, was executed for treason following the Shah's return to power. (U)

¹⁸⁸ Adele Ferdows, *Religion in Iranian Nationalism: The Study of the Fedayan-i-Islam*, Indiana University PhD Dissertation, 1967, p. 48. (U)

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Tehran magazine in mid-1951, will convey some of the flavor. The original is written in a heavily arabicized Persian:

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If Islamic instructions were put into effect in this country, the rays of prosperity and happiness would shine constantly upon this land . . . three-fourths of the educated class of Iranians are void of human character and have many vices.

Men, women, girls, and boys in the street, bazaars, offices, factories, and in other public places get together day and night and give their passions full freedom. The conferences held in various ministries every day . . . are some samples of such activities between male and female officials.

Those who are wearing the clergy's cloak but in reality are enemies of Islam should be unmasked and denounced.

An administration should be established under the supervision of well-informed and honest clergymen in order to command people according to religious laws to do good things and prohibit evil things.

In schools courses have been prohibited . . . such as music should not be taught. . . . Only men should be employed for boys' schools and women for girls' schools.

The present cinemas or houses of crime and debauchery must be annihilated. If the country has to have cinemas and theaters . . . special places should be provided for men and for women. The subjects of plays and cinemas must always consist of pieces of the history of Islam and Shi'ism and stories that would conform with morals. . . . Instead of the awful noises that are usually heard in these cinemas, the delightful voices of persons who recite verses of the Koran must be heard.

The public dress and the hat are like the national flag and are reminiscent of religious and national traditions. . . . Then why does the Moslem Iranian nation wear strange hats and attach reins to their necks. A new style of hat should be invented which would remove entirely the foreign look from the Moslem people.

Medical faculties of the world and the Iranian Islamic university must make meticulous study of the radiant tenets of Islam. Humanity should be dependent on Islam. The health of the people of the world must be insured. In this sacred cause we are ready to extend practical assistance to the world and to the Islamic University of Iran. . . .

Iranians who have the honor of going to Najaf and Kerbala are well aware of the fact that upon arrival in the date producing areas of the holy land and getting acclimatized, they sense a need for dates. When they return to Iran they do not eat dates. The matter . . . speaks for itself. A great medical point was encompassed in a small example. A medical mistake is hereby revealed. The people of each area are the same as the environment in which they live. In order to live, be healthy, and be immune from the diseases of Baghdad, the plants, medicines, the water, and the weather of that area are necessary. Likewise, the medicine and food in other areas are undoubtedly harmful for people in that area. Therefore, it is incumbent upon medical men and the Islamic University of Iran and the universities of the world to study scientifically the life-weather around them and to prepare appropriate medicines. If the Islamic University of Iran and the medical universities of the world need any help . . . we will, with the help of God, put at their disposal the necessary scientific and practical equipment.¹⁸⁹ (U)

The Fedayan died with Safavi, but thousands who had been followers remained. Although there seems to have been no formal organization, occasional acts of violence by "religious reactionaries" may have been carried out by some of those remnants. The murder of Prime Minister Mansur in early 1965 is likely to have been carried out by Fedayan remnants. ☐

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The reestablishment of a Fedayan-e-Islam by Ayatollah Khalkhali provides a link with the Islamic movement of the past, emphasizing the continuity of the movement, as well as further legitimatizing violence as its chief instrument of persuasion. ☐

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¹⁸⁹ For similar views of Khomeini, see p. 67. (U)

Glossary

adalatkhaneh: A house of justice.

akhbari: A school of thought in Shia Islam that believes that the only sources of the *Shariah* are the Koran and the Sunna. The *Akhbaris* reject *ijtihad*, the authority of the *mujtaheds*, and the concept of the *mar'a-e-taqlid*. The *Akhbaris* flourished between the 12th and 19th centuries and were defeated in a power struggle with the *usulis*.

Al-Kitab: (The Book). Used as an epithet for the Koran.

amma: Traveling, moving, a forward movement on a straight road.

aql: Human reason which permits the truth to be discovered.

Ashura: The tenth day of *Moharram* (The month of religious mourning).

ayatullahzadeh: A descendant of a famous and learned *mujtahed*.

Bahai: An adherent of a religious movement originating among Shia Muslims in Iran in the 19th century and emphasizing the spiritual unity of mankind.

Bakhtiari: An Iranian tribe. Also a proper name.

bast: Sanctuary, usually in a mosque or in the home of a religious leader. Refuge.

bazaaris: Bazaar merchants.

caliph: A successor of Muhammad as temporal and spiritual head of Islam.

chador: (tent) A one-piece, cape-like garment. Pulled over the head with a corner held in the teeth, it served many women as a convenient outer garment. Custom more than religion recommended it until the last two or three years when wearing it became a symbol of opposition to the Shah.

dasteh: A neighborhood social-religious group that meets to discuss politics and the Koran.

falsafah: Philosophical sciences.

faqih: Jurisprudent.

farangi: A non-Muslim European. The unclean and heathen.

fatwa: A legal ruling.

Fergeh-ye zalleh: (The misguiding group). Term applied by the clergy to the Bahai.

fiqh: Jurisprudence.

forqan: Victory over unbelievers. The triumph of good over evil. Also used as an epithet for the Koran.

gharbzadegi: Westernization (pejorative usage).

ghazi: An Islamic judge.

hadith: A tradition relating to the Prophet or, for the Shiites, one of the imams.

hajji: One who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca (often used as a title).

haram: Forbidden.

Hidden Imam: The 12th and last imam of the Shiites whose return will mark the beginning of a just world.

hijra: Flight (Muhammad from Mecca in 622 A.D.).

hikmet: Wisdom, usually equated with *falsafah*, or Islamic philosophy, that is, the application of human reason and intellect to proving the truth of the *Shariah*.

Hojjat al-Islam: An honorific suggesting something more than a mullah but not as grand as an ayatollah.

Hosseiniyeh: The place primarily devoted to the performance of the Martyrdom of Hosein.

Hujja: The Proof of God.

ijma: Consensus.

ijtihad: The right of a *mujtahed* to give a new legal opinion based on the traditional sources of law.

ilm: Knowledge.

imam: A Muslim leader of the line of Ali held by Shiites to be the divinely appointed, sinless, infallible successors of Muhammad.

imamate: The office of an imam.

imamzadeh: Shrine associated with descendants of the imams.

irfan: Esoteric knowledge.

isnad: The chain of transmission of a *hadith*.

ivan: A side chamber or reception room with one side open to the main courtyard of a mosque.

- ji had*: A holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty. A crusade for a principle or belief.
- jinn*: One of a class of spirits that according to Muslim demonology inhabit the earth, assume various forms, and exercise supernatural power.
- kalam*: (The Word). Theology.
- Khalifa*: Successor to Muhammad. Sunni usage.
- khums*: A Shia religious tax (literally one-fifth) paid to the family of the Prophet.
- komiteh*: Committee.
- Koran*: The book composed of writings accepted by Muslims as revelations made to Muhammad by Allah through the angel Gabriel.
- madraseh*: A religious school.
- Mahdi*: The Messiah. The Hidden Imam.
- majlis*: Assembly.
- maktab*: The five or six years of religiously oriented elementary school.
- marja-e-taqid*: A *mujtahed* worthy of imitation. The *mujtahed* par excellence, recognized by Shiites as their supreme leader.
- mashrutah*: Constitutionalism.
- minbar*: The pulpit.
- Moharram*: Month of religious mourning.
- muballighin*: Propagandists who are not *mujtaheds* but preachers.
- mujtahed*: One who by reason of his education, knowledge, and piety has the right to make new judgments on matters of Islamic law.
- mullah*: A Muslim of a quasi-clerical class trained in traditional law and doctrine.
- Muqaddimat*: The elements of religious knowledge.
- mutah*: Temporary marriage.
- nakhl*: Ceremonial sedan chair which represents the vehicle in which Hosein and his relatives were carried to the final battle at Karbala.
- Now Ruz*: New Years Day. A pre-Islamic Iranian holiday still observed today.
- Parcham-e-Islam*: (The Banner of Islam). *Fedayan-e-Islam* newspaper of the 1940s and 1950s.
- qibla*: The direction in which a Muslim faces when praying.
- Ramadan*: The ninth month of the Muhammadan year observed as sacred with fasting practiced daily from dawn to sunset.
- ray*: The private use of reason as a rule of law.
- seyeds*: Descendants of the Prophet.
- Shahanshah*: Ancient title for the sovereign of Iran.
- Shariah*: Islamic law.
- sheikh*: An Arab chief but also used as a title for one with religious learning.
- Shia*: The Muslims of the branch of Islam comprising sects believing in Ali and the imams as the only rightful successors of Muhammad and in the concealment and Messianic return of the last recognized imam.
- sokut*: (silence). A policy followed by some Iranian religious leaders of avoiding criticism of secular authority.
- Sufism*: Islamic mysticism.
- Sunna*: Custom or usage.
- Sunni*: The Muslims of the branch of Islam that adheres to the orthodox tradition and acknowledges the first four caliphs as rightful successors of Muhammad.
- tafsir*: Koranic commentary.
- talabeh*: A student of religion.
- tasawwuf*: Mysticism. Sufism.
- Taziyyah*: The dramatic production of the murder of Hosein and his followers.
- Tudeh Party*: The Iranian Communist Party.
- Twelver Shiism*: Became the state religion of Iran in the early 16th century. Those who recognize 12 imams rather than five (Zaidis) or seven (Ismailis).
- ulema*: The clergy.
- ummat*: The Muslim community.
- urf*: Customary or secular law.
- usul*: Roots or principles. The science of the proofs which lead to the establishment of legal standards.
- usuli*: The currently predominant school of Shiah Islam that accepts the Koran, Sunna, *ijtihad*, *aql*, and *ijma* as sources of the *Shariah*. They uphold the authority of *mujtaheds* and of the *marja-e-taqid*. This school became dominant in the 19th century.

usul al-din: The five principles of religion in which the Shiites believe.

usul al-fiqh: Principles of jurisprudence.

Waqf: The pious foundation which supports schools, orphanages, shrines, and other institutions.

zindiq: One who endangers the state by attacking the Prophet. To be accused of being a *zindiq* is more serious than a charge of unbelief. It is used as a highly charged term of vituperation.

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24 November 1979

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Mahdis in Islam

Al-Mahdi is an Arabic term meaning "the divinely guided one." Shia Islam believes that someday a mahdi will appear to restore true (i.e., purified) Islam, conquer the whole world, and usher in a short millennium before the end of the world. Belief in a coming mahdi is not a feature of Sunni Islam.

The dogma of a coming mahdi plays an essential part in Shia Islam and today is a major difference between Shia and Sunni Muslims. Shias believe that their allegiance is due to an Imam descended from Ali (d. 662 A.D.), the prophet Muhammad's son-in-law and closest male relative. The main school of Shia Islam--the "Twelvers"--believes that there were 12 Imams, the last of whom--Muhammad--"disappeared" in 878 A.D., and left no offspring. This Imam became the "hidden" Imam; Shias believe that he never died, but remains in a temporary state of occultation and will someday reappear as the mahdi. A second major school of Shia Islam--the "Seveners"--believe there were only seven imams, the last of whom also remains hidden and will return as the mahdi. In the absence of the "hidden" imam, a prominent religious leader may be considered his deputy and would be referred to as "Imam." This is the case with Ayatollah Khomeini.

Sunni Muslims--which include the vast majority of Saudi Arabians--look forward in a general way to the coming of a future restorer of the faith, but they neither emphasize his importance in their dogma nor do they refer to him as a "mahdi."

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